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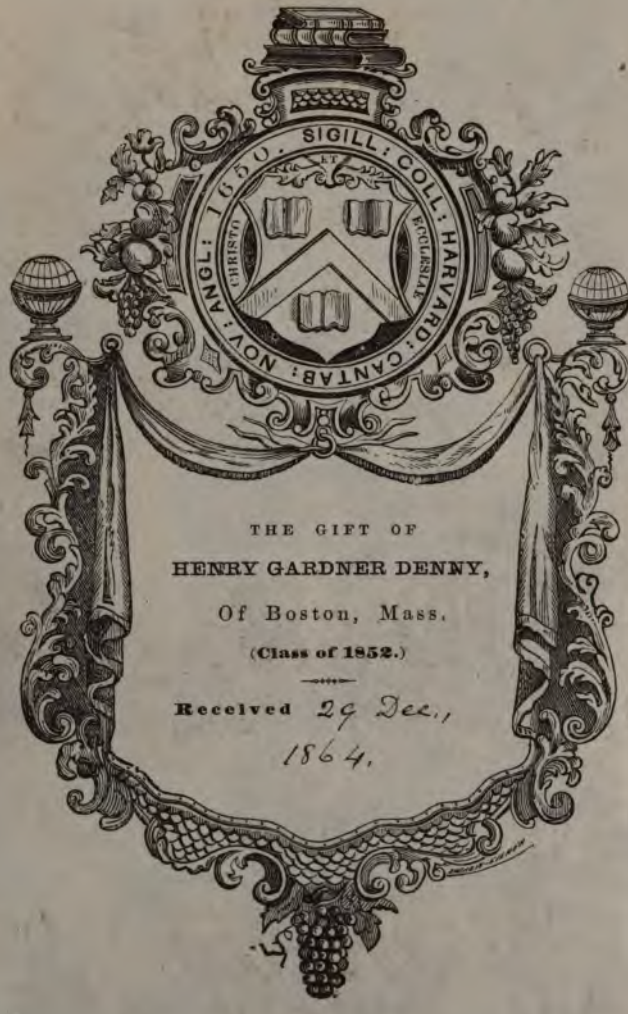

THE GIFT OF

HENRY GARDNER DENNY,

Of Boston, Mass.

(Class of 1852.)

Received 29 Dec., 1864.

UNISON

OF

THE LITURGY:

BEING AN EXHIBITION OF

The Harmony of the Subject

CONTAINED IN

THE COLLECT FOR EACH OF THE SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS IN THE YEAR, WITH THE EPISTLE, THE GOSPEL, AND THE LESSONS FOR THAT DAY, AND OF ITS ACCORDANCE WITH A CORRESPONDING TOPIC IN THE CHURCH'S CATECHISM, AND IN HER ARTICLES OF RELIGION.

BY

ARCHER GIFFORD, A. M.

"Bright holy-days, that form a galaxy
To make a road to heaven."

FROM ADVENT TO ASH-WEDNESDAY.

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PREFACE.

It has been said by learned men of the Church, that her Collects contain subjects of prayer, derived from the Epistles and Gospels; and that, on every Sunday and Holy-day, there is a leading topic commended to our meditations, to which the Collect relates, and to which the services for the day have special reference.

On certain high festivals, and on fast-days, the subjects contained in the lessons are particularly appropriate to the topic which the Church has appointed for our instruction. In many instances, annotators upon our liturgy have strikingly but partially illustrated this conformity, especially Stanhope, Boys, Hole, I. Williams, Kenney, and Burrow; but, apparently, not with the intention of applying their remarks to the lessons from Scripture, and to other portions of the service, for each Sunday and Holy-day throughout the year.

The Church undoubtedly intends, that her services should conform to, and illustrate, as far as practicable, the subject of the Collect. An attentive observer will see the happy effect of this; and whether the lessons and other

portions of the service have or have not been selected for the purpose, it is an interesting exercise to consider them as integral. They thus profitably engage the mind, in that train of thought so prominently suggested in the comprehensive and leading prayer which precedes the Epistle and Gospel; and, by means of a pleasing unison of thought, they instruct us, from week to week, in the Church's doctrine, discipline, and worship.

It is evident, that some allusion may properly be made, every Sunday, to the Catechism of the Church, and to her Articles. And a very edifying and wholesome exercise may be derived from these parts of our formularies, by reflecting that light upon them which emanates from various authors who have written separately upon the Collects, the Epistles, and the Gospels, and from commentators on the Lessons, the Catechism, and the Articles.

The opinions of sound writers, wherever they could be found incidentally referring to the topic for the day, have, it is hoped, been so blended, as to present each topic in the most consolidated form, and instructive manner. Care has been taken, in making selections from standard authorities, with regard to matters which are doctrinal in their nature, or which relate especially to Church services or discipline; and their phraseology has been retained, in all cases of importance. Among the authorities referred to are Hooker, Wheatley, Sparrow, Whitby, Burnet, Beveridge, Mant, Nichols, Secker, South, Horsley, Stanhope, and Hole. Other writers have been resorted to, wherever they furnished interpretations consonant with the plan pursued in this work, or where their remarks were found to

be practically instructive. Among these writers are Doddridge, Matthew Henry, Flavel, A. Clarke, and Dwight.

The selections of Poetry are chiefly from the works of Keble, Herbert, Heber, Williams, Grinfield, Mant, Peter, and Muhlenburg; and from the Sacra Poesis.

The author has endeavored to draw from ecclesiastical literature what may interest and instruct all those, who wish to acquire a knowledge of the Church's Institutions, and to gather, from her sacred treasury of "things new and old," that which may *thoroughly furnish* "unto all good works."

NEWARK, N. J.:
December 24, 1855.

ADVERTISEMENT.

SINCE the circulation of a few specimen pages of this work, comprising the Sundays in Advent, many letters have been received from Bishops of the Church, and from clergymen and laymen, commending the plan and execution, and advising the author to continue his labors. The expense and research attending the preparation of the volume, have unavoidably prevented its appearance at an earlier date.

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LORD OF ALL POWER AND MIGHT, WHO ART THE AUTHOR AND GIVER OF ALL GOOD THINGS; GRAFT IN OUR HEARTS THE LOVE OF THY NAME, INCREASE IN US TRUE RELIGION, NOURISH US WITH ALL GOODNESS, AND OF THY GREAT MERCY KEEP US IN THE SAME; THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

Sundays in Advent.

"Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

A Path of peace amid the tangled grove,
  A Moon-lit way of sweet security;
  Bright *holy-days*, that form a galaxy
To make a road to Heaven; strains from above,
Whereon the spheres of duty kindlier move,
  Drinking pure light and heaven-born harmony:
  Such is the path of thy calm Liturgy,
Ancient of Mothers, in parental love
  Daily unwinding from thine annual maze
  Treasures that wax not old, whence still may grow
Fresh adoration. On thy face (of thee
  Praying to be more worthy) as we gaze,
  Thy soul comes forth in beauty, and thy brow
So calm, is full of holiest Deity.

INTRODUCTION.

OF THE HOLY-DAYS OF THE CHURCH.

THE holy-days observed by our Church are either *weekly* or *annual.* Of the first kind, are all SUNDAYS in the year; of the second, are the NATIVITY of our Lord, GOOD FRIDAY, the day of the ASCENSION, and all those days which are usually denominated SAINTS' DAYS. The hallowing or sanctifying of every seventh day, by appropriating it to the more immediate service of God, and to the offices of religion, is a practice common to Jews and Christians; with this difference, however, among others, that Christians, in the system of their ecclesiastical polity, have transferred the repose and worship of the Sabbath, or seventh day, to Sunday, or the *first* day of the week, in commemoration of the resurrection of the Saviour of the world.

Of the practice of holding religious assemblies on the first day of the week, Sunday, instead of Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, frequent mention is made in the New Testament. About twenty-five years after our Lord's resurrection, and while all the Apostles, except James the greater, might yet be living, St. Paul preached at Troas, "upon the first day of the week, when the disci-

ples came together to break bread." To the Corinthians the same Apostle writes, "concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the *first day of the week* let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

When the early fathers addressed the Gentiles, they did not hesitate to call the Lord's day *Sunday*, that being the name by which it was commonly distinguished among the Greeks and Romans. This was done by JUSTIN MARTYR, and TERTULLIAN, among others, in their respective apologies, though it is observable, that the latter, when he writes to Christians, commonly uses the name of Lord's day, and especially when he would distinguish it from the Jewish Sabbath.

Besides the weekly festival of *The Lord's day*, the ancient Christians celebrated annual festivals in honor of our Saviour, such as The Nativity, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost.

Other annual festivals were instituted at an early period, in commemoration of the Apostles, and of Martyrs, by whose labors or sufferings Christianity had been propagated and maintained. At what precise period these festivals began to be observed, cannot readily be ascertained; but it is certain, that they were solemnized in the second century.

From the Calendars or Records kept in different churches, to preserve the memory of primitive Martyrs, as well as of reputed saints and confessors of modern date, general accounts were formed; and the number of martyrologies was found at length to be so great, that churches in general appointed one day for the common

commemoration of *All Saints*. Each individual church, however, assigned especial days for the particular observance of the festivals of the Apostles, of their own saints, and of such of those of other countries, as had obtained particular celebrity.

In this state the calendar and offices of the Church of England existed, at the time of our Reformation. Whatever had been publicly practised or taught in preceding ages, was then carefully and scrupulously examined; and either preserved, as expedient and useful, or rejected, as unprofitable or offensive. Our Reformers retained as many of the holy-days as they deemed to be conducive to the advancement of religion and true piety; correcting, however, some erroneous views that were entertained respecting the saints, whose anniversaries they still continued to commemorate.

OF THE COLLECTS.

This name is given to certain short and comprehensive prayers, which are found in all known liturgies and public devotional offices. The use of the term being very ancient, it is difficult, if not impossible, to give any satisfactory account of it. Ritualists have thought, that these prayers were so called, because they were used in the public congregation or collection of people, because many petitions are here collected together, comprehending objects of prayer gathered out of the Epistles and the Gospels, and because they are a brief summary of those things which are necessary for the soul and body, for *time* and for *eternity*. Whatever may be the origin

of the term, it is one of great antiquity. The Collects have been culled from the devotional offices of ages past; and of not a few it may be said, that their origin lies in the distant glory of Primitive Christianity.

They are the most passionate, proper, and elegant expressions, that any language ever afforded; and there is in them such piety, and that so interwoven with instruction, that they teach us to know the power, the wisdom, the majesty, and the mercy of God, and much of our duty both to him and to our neighbor. The devotions of a congregation conducting themselves reverently, and presenting to God these joint and known desires for pardon of sin, and these praises for mercies received, cannot but be more pleasing to our Creator, than the unpremeditated expressions to which many hearers cannot say, Amen. The Collects are ushered in, with such attributes of God as are proper and suitable to the petitions contained in them, and are offered up in the name and through the mediation of Jesus Christ; and, as on every day and at every season, there is something more particularly commended by the Church to our meditations, so the Collect relates chiefly to that subject, though sometimes, in a general manner, to the whole matter of the Epistle and Gospel, desiring inspiration, strength, and protection, from God, in the practice and pursuit of what is set before us. (*a*)

(*a*) The Collect for the day, that is for Sundays and other holy-days, follows the versicles after the creeds, except in the morning when the communion service is read, and then it may be omitted, but in the evening service it is always to be used.

THE COLLECT.

And let me, loving still of thee to learn,
  Thy weekly collect on my spirit wear,
  That so my steps may turn to practice clear,
And 'scape those ways where feverish fancies burn;
So may thy Sunday thoughts, at every turn,
  Meet us, like healthful founts in Elim green, (a)
  Casting a freshness o'er the week. This scene
Of outward things, as still the wheels return,
  Leads sternly to decay; thou ever true,
As on the grave, and withering age we gain,
  Thy tale of better things dost still renew;
    Like tune that pleased our childhood's pensive ear,
    Still as we older grow 'tis doubly dear,
Age wakening echoes new, and deep and deeper strain.

OF THE EPISTLES AND THE GOSPELS.

The Epistles are certain portions of Scripture, selected mostly from the writings of the Apostles, containing many excellent rules and precepts for instruction and comfort, in all conditions. They are called Epistles, because they were sent by the Apostles, as letters to the several churches or places to which they are inscribed; for which reason they still retain that title.

Though some few of these portions are taken from the Acts, or other canonical books, they all receive their denomination from the Epistles. They were anciently appropriated to the days on which we now read them,

(a) Exodus xv. 27.

since they are not only of general use throughout the whole western Church, but are also commented upon in the homilies of several ancient fathers, which are supposed to have been preached upon those very days to which these portions of Scripture are now affixed; so that most of them have belonged to the same Sundays and holy-days, as we now use them, for more than twelve hundred years.

As the Jews had the Law and the Prophets read in their synagogues every Sabbath day, so Christians have the Epistles and the Gospels (the great evidences of their faith) rehearsed in places where they assemble, and in their churches.

In the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, it was customary, both in the Greek and the Latin Church, to introduce some portions of the New Testament, in the form of lessons. These were selected from the Epistles and the Gospels, and frequently formed the subjects of Exposition, in the sermons and homilies delivered at the time. The propriety of reading the Epistle and the Gospel in order, will appear from this, that as our Saviour's disciples were sent "before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come," so here the Epistle, as the word of the servant, is read first, that it may be as a harbinger to the Gospel, to which the last place and greatest honor is reserved, this being the word of their great Master.

Though the congregation sit during the reading of the Epistle, they stand while the Gospel is read, paying this particular mark of reverence to the record of what our blessed Lord did, spake, or suffered, for our salvation; and the custom of standing up and saying, "Glory be to thee, O Lord," when the minister was

about to read the Holy Gospel, is as ancient as St. Chrysostom.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL.

"He learns then truth, who keeps my word."
So, Saviour, didst thou say;
And so the Psalmist sweet accords
Told, long ago, of their rewards
Who strive to keep thy way.

A daily spring of thrilling love,
Dreams golden, in the night;
A wisdom all world-walks approve,
Than "old experience" e'en above;
The fruit of faith, not sight.

A patience, that shrinks not to meet
Thy judgments, till they grow
Than Hermon's fragrant dew more sweet;
Such are the treasures at our feet;
Such healing herbs we know!

Herbs, that not only heal, but more;
Strong amulets they be;
Till those who shunned ill ways before,
To learn thy truth, now feel the power
Of truth that makes them free!

OF THE LESSONS.

When the heart has been lifted up to God, in the sacred exercise of praise, by reciting the Psalms, we are in a suitable disposition to hear his Holy Word.

By this means, an agreeable respite or intermission is given to the devotional state of our minds; for, our thoughts were required to be active in the Psalms, but it is sufficient, in the lessons, if they are attentive. Now, therefore, two lessons follow, one out of the Old Testament, the other out of the New; to show the harmony existing between the *law* and the *gospel:* for the *law* is the gospel prefigured; the *gospel* is the law fulfilled.

For the lessons on ordinary week days, the Church begins with the first chapter of Genesis, in the month of January, and continues until all the books of the Old Testament are read through, with the exception of certain omissions. The books of Chronicles are omitted, because they are, for the most part, the same with the books of Samuel and of Kings. The Song of Solomon is wholly omitted, because it should be read with a disposition to understand it spiritually, and therefore is not a proper book to be read to a mixed congregation. Isaiah is appointed for the time of *Advent;* this evangelical prophet being the best monitor, to prepare us for a true faith in the mystery of Christ's incarnation and birth. Several chapters in Ezekiel are omitted, on account of the mystical visions which they contain. For the lessons on Sundays, from Advent to Septuagesima Sunday, the season which the Church has appointed for the celebration of the incarnation of Christ and his manifestation to the Gentile world, some particular chapters are selected from the prophecies of Isaiah, who predicts those great events with more clearness and sublimity than any other prophet. For Septuagesima Sunday, and the following Sundays before Lent and during that season, being the time of penitence and

mortification, the Church appoints certain chapters out of the Prophets, which declare the judgments of God against sin, and are intended to excite to repentance and reformation. But, on the Sundays towards the end of Lent, with a view to prepare for the proper celebration of Good Friday and Easter, the Church reads parts of some of the Prophets, which immediately refer to the death of Christ, and to his glorious completion of the work of redemption. On the Sundays succeeding Easter, portions of Scripture, to the same evangelical purport, are read, until Trinity Sunday, when Genesis is taken up, and such chapters of this book, and of the succeeding books of Scripture, as are deemed particularly instructive in piety and morals, are continued to the season of Advent.

On saints' days, the Church appoints lessons out of the moral books, such as Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, which, being full of excellent instruction, are proper to be read on the festivals of saints, whose exemplary lives and deaths are the causes of their commemoration by the Church, and of their being recommended to our imitation. Other holy-days, such as Christmas, Circumcision, and Epiphany, have proper lessons suited to the occasions. Proper lessons on all holy-days, were appointed even as early as the time of Augustine.

With respect to the second lessons, the rule on week days is, to read generally the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles in the morning, and the Epistles in the evening; both, in the order in which they stand in the New Testament. But on Sundays, saints' days, and other holy-days, lessons suited to the occasion, are generally appointed. By the above method of appointing the lessons, the Old Testament, with few ex-

ceptions, is read through once, and the New Testament twice, in every year.

THE LESSONS.

The volume is unfolded day by day;
Unlettered hinds are greater than the proud,
And penniless old age is rich and young;
Sequestered ignorance is wiser far
Than knowledge in her city trappings dressed.
See, where combined in one diurnal round,
There moves a twofold orb of light divine,
And throws the united gleam upon our path,
Morning and eve, lightening the narrow way.

OF THE CATECHISM.

Catechism is derived from a word in Greek, which signifies instruction in the first rudiments of any art or science, communicated by asking questions, and hearing and correcting the answers. From the earliest ages of the Church, the word has been employed, to denote instruction in the principles of the Christian religion, by means of questions and answers.

Since children, in their baptism, engage to "renounce the devil and all his works, to believe in God, and to serve him;" it is proper that they should be "taught so soon as they are able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession," they have made. Accordingly, after the offices appointed for baptism follows "a Catechism; that is to say, an instruction, to be learned by every person before he be brought to be confirmed by the Bishop." As to the contents of our Catechism, it is not a large system or body of divinity, to confuse the

minds of beginners, but only a short and full explication of the baptismal vow. The Primitive Catechisms consisted of no more than a repetition of the Baptismal Vow, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer; and these, together with the Ten Commandments, were, at the Reformation, the whole of our form. But being afterwards thought defective as to the doctrine of the Sacraments, (which, in primitive times, were more largely explained to baptized persons), King James I. directed the bishops to add a short and plain explanation of these. This was accordingly done in that excellent form we now have, written by Bishop Overall, then Dean of St. Paul's, and approved by the Bishops: so that now (in the opinion of the best judges) it excels all catechisms extant; being so short, that the youngest children may readily commit it to memory, and yet so full, that it contains all things necessary to be known for our salvation.

THE CATECHISM.

Oh, say not, dream not, heavenly notes
  To childish ears are vain,
That the young mind at random floats,
  And cannot reach the strain.

Dim or unheard, the words may fall,
  And yet the heaven-taught mind
May learn the sacred air, and all
  The harmony combined.

Was not our Lord a little child,
  Taught by degrees to pray,
By father dear and mother mild
  Instructed day by day?

And loved he not of Heaven to talk
With children in his sight,
To meet them in his daily walk,
And to his arms invite?

In his own words we Christ adore;
But Angels, as we speak,
Higher above our meaning soar,
Than we o'er children weak:

And yet his words mean more than they,
And yet he owns their praise;
Why should we think he turns away
From infants' simple lays?

OF THE ARTICLES.

We learn from the New Testament, that they who first embraced the Gospel declared their faith in Jesus, as the promised Messiah, in simple and general terms (Acts viii. 37); and there is no reason for supposing, that the Apostles required this declaration to be made in any particular form of words. No such form is transmitted to us. Every Bishop was authorized to prescribe a formulary, for the use of his own church. But when heresies became frequent, and destroyed uniformity of belief among Christians, it became necessary to have a public standard of faith; and to this cause we are to attribute the origin of creeds, the design of which was, to establish the genuine doctrines of the Gospel, in opposition to the errors which then prevailed, and to exclude from communion with the orthodox Church of Christ all who held heretical opinions. New dissensions and

controversies continually arose, and caused corruptions, which received the sanction and authority even of councils, convened, according to the practice of the Apostolic age, for the purpose of declaring "The truth as it is in Jesus." These corruptions, supported by secular power and by the darkness and ignorance of the times, continued until the Reformation, when the several churches which had separated from the Roman communion found it expedient to publish confessions of their faith. Convocations for this purpose were held at London, in 1552, and again, in 1562. Articles then agreed on were revised, and some small alterations were made in them in 1571; since which time, they have continued to be the criterion of the faith of the members of the Church of England. These Articles have been adopted by the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.

RATIFICATION.

Articles of Religion; as established by the Bishops, the Clergy, and the Laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, in convention, on the 12th day of September, in the year of our Lord 1801.

1 Cor. i. 10.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

ADVENT.

Hark! through the desert wilds what awful voice
Swells on the gale, and bids the world rejoice?
What Prophet form, in holy raptures led,
The gray mists hov'ring o'er his sacred head,
Prepares on earth Messiah's destin'd way,
And hastes the mighty messenger of day?
Lo! echoing skies resound the gladsome strain;
Messiah comes! ye rugged paths, be plain;
The Shiloh comes! ye tow'ring cedars bend;
Swell forth, ye valleys; and, ye rocks, descend;
The wither'd branch let balmy fruits adorn,
And clust'ring roses 'twine the leafless thorn;
Burst forth, ye vocal groves, your joy to tell,
The God of Peace redeems his Israel.

At this time the Church begins her ecclesiastical year, and renews the annual course of her sacred services, differing, in this respect, from all other communions; for she does not measure her appointed seasons, by the motion of the sun, but by the course of our Saviour's life, beginning and reckoning the year with him, who, being *the true Sun of Righteousness*, began now to rise upon the world, and, as *the day-star on high*, to enlighten those who sat in spiritual darkness.

It is called *Advent*, (*a*) because it celebrates the advent or coming of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came in the fulness of time, according to God's appointment, to redeem the world. The Sundays in Advent are to Christmas, as St. John Baptist was to Christ; they are forerunners, to prepare for it, and point it out. The services, by their allusions to John's character and office as the messenger and harbinger of the Lord, by the selection of proper Lessons from Isaiah, and by their general purport, are admirably adapted to this preparatory season. At his first coming, he visited us in great humility, as is signified in the Gospel for the first Sunday in this Advent season; and in every particular he exactly answered to the descriptions which the prophets had given, of *Him* whom God would send as the Redeemer. At the end of the world, he will come again, in a different character, as a glorious King, to judge both the quick and the dead. This *second coming* is called his second Advent.

The Roman ritualists consider the celebration of this holy season to be apostolical, and instituted by St. Peter; but the precise time of the institution is not easily determined. It certainly had its beginning before the year 450; because Maximus Taurinensis, who lived about that time, wrote a homily upon it. For the more strict and religious observance of the season, courses of sermons were formerly preached in cathedrals, on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Great austerity was practised in the ancient church, during this season. At first, they fasted three days in a week; but afterwards, every day.

(*a*) Adventus Redemptoris.

The first Sunday in Advent is always the nearest Sunday to the feast of St. Andrew, whether before or after; and it may be observed, that the lessons and services for the first four Sundays in the liturgical year of the Church, propose to our meditation the twofold Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ; teaching us, that it is he who was to come, and who did come, to redeem the world; and that it is he, who shall come again to be our judge.

For the greater solemnity of the three principal holydays,—Christmas-day, Easter-day, and Whitsunday,—the Church has appointed certain days to attend them; some to precede, and others to follow. Before Christmas, are four Advent Sundays; which are so called, because the design of them is to prepare us for the religious commemoration of the Advent, or coming of Christ in the flesh.

The initiation of our Saviour into the office of Mediator, was by his manifestation in the flesh, which had been promised, from the fall of man, until, as the Apostle says, the fulness of time was come, Gal. iv. 4; and, the further we remove from this time, the more obscure are the prophecies; the nearer we approach it, the more explicit they are. First, Gen. iii. 15, it was predicted, that *the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head;* if we proceed to Abraham, Gen. xxii. 18, "*In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;*" and David says, "Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne," Psalm cxxxii. 11. In the time of Isaiah, the prophecy is more clear and demonstrative; "*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,*" chap. vii. 14. Go nearer to the present time, and the promise is still more clear; "*Behold thou*

shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS," Luke i. 31. And the Virgin Mary said, "*Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed,*" Luke i. 48. All this, it seems, was intended to keep up the hope of the long-expected *Theophany*,(*a*) or the Messiah's appearance in the flesh.

God himself having thus led on the nativity of our Saviour, with such a train of antecedent predictions, to assure man that he would come, the Christian Church deems it expedient, that the day of its commemoration should be more than ordinarily attended. She has accordingly assigned to this great festival the four Sundays preceding, as before mentioned, and therefore called Advent Sundays, as heralding Christ's birthday; and therefore the ancient author of the Nativity Sermon, ascribed to Cyprian, begins it with, "*Adest diu expectata nativitas;*" that is, "*The long looked for Nativity*, expected all this time of Advent, *is come at length.*"

A few short years make up our pilgrimage;
  A few short weeks make up the fleeting year;
Each week doth bear a heavenly embassage;
  With silent steps upon a crystal stair,
  It comes and goes to Heaven. With sweet care
The Church hath deck'd each week with blooming wings,
  Which else were earth's stern-hearted messenger
Leading to death; she at perennial springs
Clothes it with holy light, and like an angel brings.

At every turn, throughout life's wilderness,
  In pillar'd fire, smote rock, or healed springs,
His presence she reveals, and power to bless:
  When the Autumnal wind of ruin sings,

(*a*) Θεοφάνεια, Manifestation of God.

She blends her Advent chant of happier things;
As louder swell the sounds of stern decay,
The higher doth she lift her herald voice, till wings
And angel forms are seen, and on our way
Springs, from dark Winter's womb, the face of endless day.

The First Sunday in Advent.

COLLECT. (a)

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light.—Ps. cxxxviii.; 3 John iii. 19, 20, 21; Rom. xiii. 12; Eph. v. 11; Phil. ii. 13; Col. iii. 9, 10; 1 John i. 6, 7; Isa. ix. 2; 2 Cor. iv. 6; Jam. iv. 6; 2 Pet. i. 19.

Now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility.—Matt. xxi. 5; Luke i. 78, 79; John viii. 12, and xii. 46; 2 Cor. vi. 2; Phil. ii. 5–7; Ps. xxxix. 12; Mal. iv. 2; 1 Pet. i. 17.

That in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and dead,—Matt. xxv. 31, 32; John v. 28, 29; 2 Thess. i. 7; 1 Pet. iv. 5; Ps. xlv. 3; Matt. xix. 28; Mark xiv. 62; Acts x. 42.

We may rise to the life immortal,—John xi. 23, 26; 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54; 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17; Rev. i. 18; Matt. xxv. 46; Rom. ii. 7; Rev. xx. 6.

Through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever.—Rom. vi. 9, 10; 1 Cor. xv. 20, 22; Heb. i. 8; Rev. xvii. 14, and xix. 16; Acts v. 31; Col. iii. 3, 4; 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

(a) This Collect is to be repeated every day, with the other Collects in Advent, until Christmas-day.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

Conversion from sin, in view of the last day, when our Lord shall come to judge both the quick and the dead.

The Collect for the day, which is taken out of the Epistle and the Gospel, and which relates to both, puts us in mind of a double Advent or coming of the Son of God: the one respects this life, he came as a Saviour, "to visit us in great humility;" the other respects the life to come, when he shall come again as a judge, "in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and dead." To prepare us for both, the Church teaches us to pray, this day, for grace, that we may "cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life, that in the last day we may rise to the life immortal."

The consideration of his second coming to judge the world, "both the quick and dead," when he will execute vengeance upon all those who obey not the Gospel, is presented to us in the services of Advent, to induce us to conform ourselves to the design of Christ's first coming, which was, that he might purify us unto himself *a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Our Lord Jesus Christ will, at the end of the world, descend from heaven in his human nature, and summon all mankind to appear before his tribunal, where they shall have all their actions strictly examined, and, according to the nature of them, be doomed to eternal happiness, or eternal misery. Acts xvii. 31; 2 Pet. iii. 10; Matt. xxv.; Rom. xiv. 10; 2 Cor. v. 10.

The object of this beautiful prayer is, that we may be enlightened by the Word of God, and enabled by divine

grace to lead a holy life. So enlightened, we shall be neither ignorant of duty, nor sinful in practice; but, knowing Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world, and defended from the evil of sin by the armor of spiritual light, we shall live in the knowledge of the true God; in faith in his Son; in fellowship with his Spirit. Rom. viii. 16. We shall be steady in our obedience to his laws, as our Father, who is in heaven, who thence seeth, more clearly than light (1 John i. 5), all we do, whether for evil or for good; who taketh account even of our thoughts; who will *hereafter judge the quick and the dead, by that man whom he hath ordained,* and who, finally, will lead those who have done good into life eternal, and will cast those who have done evil into everlasting fire.

THE EPISTLE.—Rom. xiii. 8.

The Epistle for the day, out of which the Collect was taken, directs us to those graces of God's Holy Spirit, and those acts of a good life, which are necessary to qualify and prepare us, to celebrate the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, and to make us partakers of the blessedness and joy of his appearance.

It is the design of this Epistle, to induce us to lay aside all wicked and sinful practices, that unfit us for the coming of our Saviour, and to adorn ourselves with all those graces and virtues that serve to qualify us for his Advent, and prepare us for the great festival of his nativity. How intense should be our solicitude, to do that which the Apostle exhorts us to do, in the Epistle, and which the Church directs us, on this Sunday and continually during the ensuing season, to beseech Al-

mighty God to give us grace to do, "to cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light." As it is only by his grace that we can do this, so it is only through his merits, that our deficiencies can be supplied, in our imperfect attempts to cast off the one, and invest ourselves with the other.

The great lesson and dying injunction which our blessed Lord gave to the disciples, when taking leave of them, was to love one another. Very earnestly, therefore, does the Church, when she bids us look for his return, thus begin the Epistle for the day, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another."

The phrase to awake out of sleep, imports, 1. The conversion of heathens to Christianity;—2. Our care to walk, as becometh converts, with true Christian vigilance. 1 Cor. xv. 34; 1 Thess. v. 6, 7. He calls the time of the ignorance of the Gentiles *the night;* and so *the day* must be the appearance of the Gospel light to them; and this is very suitable to the language of Holy Scripture, which speaks to the Gentiles thus: "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." Eph. v. 8; and see Eph. iv. 18; Rom. i. 20; Isa. ix. 2; Luke i. 78, 79; Acts xxvi. 18; 1 Pet. ii. 9.

THE GOSPEL.—St. Matt. xxi. 1.

The prophecy alluded to in this Gospel, was delivered by Zechariah, five hundred years before the Advent of Christ (Zech. xiv. 5); and St. Matthew says, it had its accomplishment, when our Lord entered Jerusalem in the manner here described, amidst the acclamations of the attending multitude. The prediction was thus literally and most exactly fulfilled in Jesus of Naza-

reth. No other king with these characteristic marks about him, ever thus came to Zion, before him; and since the Jews rejected him, they have lost their temple, their city, and their country; nor has there been a Zion to which their king might come.

The Epistle for the day is like the herald voice in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." It sounds the preparation for his appearing in light and glory. But the Gospel carries us back to his former Advent, and his visiting us in great humility. It acquaints us with our Saviour's humble yet triumphant entry into Jerusalem,—"came to visit us in great humility." It would seem, at first, more applicable to Christ's passion than to his birth; but it is read principally for those words in it: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;" that is, blessed is he, for coming in the flesh, the cause of all our joy, for which we cannot say too often, "Hosanna in the highest."

The events recorded of the Advent of Christ, by writers of the New Testament, were in fulfilment of the predictions announced by writers of the Old. It is said, particularly, of one of these events, in the Gospel for the day, "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee;" and, accordingly, the fact of the Son of God's having thus come "to visit us in great humility," may convince us, that he *will hereafter* "*come again* in his glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and dead."

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, Isa. i.

As the Epistles and the Gospels assure us of Christ's coming, when he will execute vengeance on all that obey not his Gospel, we have in this lesson the charges which are exhibited, in God's name, against the Jewish nation, for their ingratitude and corruption; and an earnest call to repentance and reformation, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken," *v.* 2. The first sound of the Gospel by St. John the Baptist, was a summons to repentance, because the kingdom of heaven was then at hand; even so, the evangelical prophet Isaiah here calls upon us to prepare, by a timely repentance, for the coming of our Lord.

Those hypocritical services, which had no godliness, no sincerity, no true love of God in them, were not the services which God required (*v.* 12) or took delight in. He would not accept of vain compliments, nor be bribed with pretended gifts, offered only to excuse from duty, to compound for sin, and to palliate unjust dealings.

The prophet speaks, in *v.* 11, of the ritual of Moses's Law, as of no benefit, without that inward purity which was signified by it. This was a proper method to prepare men's minds for the reception of the Gospel, by showing them a more excellent way of serving God, than the ceremonial law directly prescribes; so that Christ's abolishing the legal rites which gave to the Jews so great offence, was agreeable to the doctrine of their own prophets, and was even foretold by some of them. The pardon of sin upon repentance, is expressed in Scripture by cleansing and purifying; to denote, that

the outward cleansing of the flesh was designed to put men in mind of the inward purification, and thus "to prepare and make ready the way" for Christ's coming.

Second Lesson, LUKE I. 1–39.

This chapter contains an account of the conception of our Saviour, by the Virgin Mary, and the announcement of his advent, by the angel Gabriel; that he should be called the Son of God, the Highest; and "reign over the house of Jacob for ever," whilst the house and the seed of Jacob endure. His kingdom is never to give place to any kingdom, as the four monarchies did, Dan. vii. 14. As we pray, that God would "give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light," we are shown, in *v.* 78 and 79, this "tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." See Luke ii. 32, and John i. 5.

We have here, too, the prophecy and history of the conception of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ. It was the angel's message to Zacharias, "Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God," *v.* 16; that is, the announcement of his coming would incline their hearts to receive the Messiah, and bid him welcome, by awakening them to a sense of sin and a desire of righteousness; and would also "turn the hearts of the *fathers* to the *children*," that is, of the *Jews* to the *Gentiles;* and "the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," that is, he shall introduce the Gospel, by which the Gentiles who are now disobedient shall be turned,

not so much to their fathers, the Jews, as to the faith of Christ, here called "the wisdom of the just," in common with the believing Jews; or, he shall turn the hearts of the fathers with the children, that is, the hearts of old and young, turning them from a ritual, traditional religion, to substantial serious godliness.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, Isa. ii.

This prophecy was probably delivered in the time of Jotham, or perhaps in that of Uzziah. Isaiah prophesies the coming of the Messiah, and the destruction of idolatry, ("the works of darkness,") in the first five verses. The former part of the chapter describes the promulgation and success of the Gospel, upon the first coming of Christ, "now in the time of this mortal life in which he came to visit us;" the latter part of the chapter, from *v.* 10, is a prediction of some general judgment that should end in the utter destruction of the Jewish land and government, as at the captivity. But many of the prophet's words relate to the last judgment, "the fast day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty." The prophets often take occasion to represent the terrors of the last day, from the particular judgment which should befall some one nation.

We are to look for the second coming of Christ at the end of time, as the Old Testament saints did, for his first coming: "it is the last time," 1 John ii. 18. In view of this coming, God humbled the Jews by his judgments, as he now awakens sinners, "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty," *v.* 10. And we are taught to be affected by this great event, in our conversion, and to

trust in him alone: "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats," 20; "cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Idolaters throw away their idols, because they are ashamed of them, and of their own folly in trusting to them. Let not man be your fear, let him not be your hope; but, look to the power of God, to which all the power of man is subordinate;—dread his wrath,—let him be your hope.

Second Lesson, Rom. x.

In this chapter, the Apostle distinguishes between the Law and the Gospel; and shows, that the call of the Gentiles, *v.* 12, had been foretold: "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." *v.* 4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." We are, therefore, all alike interested to participate in the celebration of his advent. As in the Collect we pray, that we may "cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light," we may here note the *moral darkness* which is to be understood by the expression, "a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge; for they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God," *v.* 2, 3. There is nothing that oftener misleads man, than a misguided zeal; it is an *ignis fatuus*, a false fire, which often leads men to bogs and precipices. It appears in dark, ignorant and weak minds, and offers itself as a guide to those who

have lost their way. Men must be careful how they settle their practical judgment of things; God has given us understandings, to try and to examine things, and has given also the light of his Word to direct us in this trial; and, since he has afforded us sufficient light to discern between good and evil, we should diligently and carefully follow the direction of it. The time of the ignorance of the Gentiles was called *the night*, as said Theodoret; and so the day must be the appearance of the gospel light to them. This is very suitable to the language of the Holy Scriptures, which speak of the Gentiles thus, Eph. v. 8; Isa. ix. 2; Rom. i. 21. He is said to be sent "to give light to them that sit in darkness," Luke i. 79; and when Peter mentions their conversion, he tells them, God had called them "out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9.

CATECHISM.

"From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

This is the last degree of our Saviour's exaltation; and it is future: he is raised to the throne, to be the Judge at the last day, John v. 22–27. There are three benefits which Christ confers upon his Church: one, of redemption; another, of patronage; a third, of judgment. By his passion and death, we are redeemed; by his ascension, he becomes our advocate and patron; and, in this, he is our judge. The day when he shall do this, is called the day of the Lord; and such a day there shall be, 1 Thess. v. 2. And it is called His day, because his glory and majesty shall be most resplendent in it, Luke ix. 26; 2 Pet. i. 16.

There is a particular, and a general, day of judgment:—1. A particular judgment, which passes upon every man immediately upon his death, Luke xvi. 22, 23; when the soul departed is set at God's tribunal, and called to account for all thoughts, words, and actions, Rev. xiv. 13;—2. A general judgment of all men, after the reassumption of their bodies, which is here intended and described, Matt. xxv. 31–46.

Most men will have departed before that day. These are here called *dead;* and these, must rise again with their bodies, to judgment, 2 Cor. v. 10; Rom. xiv. 10; 1 Cor. xv. 4; 1 Thess. iv. 16. *All* must appear. Others, who shall be living at that day, are called the *quick;* and these shall not die, but be changed only. Of both classes Christ will be the Judge.

St. Paul informs the Athenians, that "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness," Acts xvii. 31. And this was one of the points he reasoned on before Felix, Acts xxiv. 25. But there are scoffers, who ask, "where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4; and their lives answer such self-confidence, Eccles. xi. 9. Now, if neither the light of reason, the light of conscience, the light of Scripture, nor the faith of devils, (for they tremble at it, James ii. 19), can confute and convince such scoffers, they will be convinced at the last day, appointed by God for the judgment, when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God," 1 Thess. iv. 16.

ARTICLE IV.

"—— And there sitteth, until he return to judge all men at the last day."

Our Lord's remaining in heaven till the day of judgment, appears from Acts iii. 20, 21. "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." And from Acts x. 42, where St. Peter says, "And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." The time when this is to be, is what this article and all Christians call "the last day;" for, the years and days which this world is to endure, are fixed by God, though neither men nor angels can tell, when these shall end. When this time is past, our Lord shall return from heaven, to judge both the quick and the dead, and shall render to every man according to his works.

On this subject Irenæus says, "He," that is, Christ, "shall come again, with the same flesh in which he suffered." And this is the faith which all God's people, in all ages of the Christian Church, have received and taught. May we all so live in this world, having the true faith of the Gospel, and the real practice of the sincere children of God, as to be able to say, in our hearts, with the apostle, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," Amen.

See further on this subject, Ps. cx. 1; Heb. viii. 1, 2; Col. iii. 1; 1 Thess. iv. 16; John v. 22, 27; Acts xvii. 31; 2 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Cor. v. 10; 2 Pet. iii. 10, 11, 12.

REFLECTIONS.

We should commemorate the great blessing of Christ's coming in the flesh, with firm purposes and sincere resolutions of conforming ourselves to the design and end of our Saviour's coming into the world. As the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, the great care and business of our lives should be, to avoid every thing that is evil; to mortify the deeds of the flesh; and not to suffer "sin to reign in our mortal bodies that we should obey it in the lusts thereof," since he gave himself for us, to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. We should give all diligence, to add to our faith virtue; to virtue knowledge; to knowledge temperance; to temperance patience; to patience godliness; to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity; for if these things be in us, and abound, we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us learn *first* to "cast off the works of darkness," which are put to shame and overcome by the light. The night of ignorance and persecution is further spent with us, than it was with these Romans; and we are better instructed in the evil and danger of all sinful courses; therefore, it will not become us to live any longer in them; for if we do, this will be our condemnation, that light is come into the world, and we love darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil. Let us remember, that it is beneath the dignity of a man, and the simplicity and sincerity of a Christian, to do what he dares not own; and to endeavor to hide the

deformity of his ways, especially when he considers, that he will soon be exposed, before angels and men, to his eternal shame and confusion of face. *Secondly*, let us "put on the armor of light;" that being thus armed, we may be furnished with spiritual strength enough to vanquish all temptations, and to quench all the fiery darts of Satan,—looking for the blessed hope and appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, especially *now in the time of this mortal life*, when the Son of God came to visit us in great humility, that we might be prepared for his second coming in his glorious majesty; and that we might be translated, from this mortal life, to a blessed immortality. "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed," Rom. xiii. 11.

Awake,—again the Gospel trump is blown,
From year to year it swells with louder tone;
From year to year the signs of wrath
Are gathering round the Judge's path;
Strange words fulfilled are mighty works achieved,
And truth, in all the world both hated and believed.
Awake,—why linger in the gorgeous town,
Sworn liegemen of the Cross and thorny Crown:
Up from your beds of sloth, for shame;
Speed to the Eastern mount like flame,—
Nor wonder should ye find your king in tears,
Even with the loud Hosannas ringing in his ears.

The Second Sunday in Advent.

THE COLLECT.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning—Luke xi. 27, 28; Rom. xv. 4; 2 Tim. iii. 16; 1 Cor. x. 11. See also 1 Cor. ix. 9, 10; 2 Sam. ii. 23.

Grant that we may in such wise hear them—Luke viii. 18; James i. 21; John v. 39; 1 Tim. iv. 13; Acts xvii. 11; Deut. xxxii. 46, 47; Ps. cxix. 73; 1 Peter ii. 2; 2 Peter iii. 18.

And inwardly digest them—Josh. i. 8; Heb. ii. 1.

That by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*—Heb. x. 36; Ps. cxix. 81; John xx. 31; Rev. i. 3; Luke viii. 15; Rom. xv. 13; Rev. iii. 11; 1 Pet. i. 3, 4; Heb. vi. 18, 19, 20.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

The Holy Scriptures.

The Church, to prepare us further for Christ's coming in the flesh, sends us this day, as Christ did the Pharisees, to the Holy Scriptures, for "they are they which testify of" him; all the prophecies and promises concerning him being recorded there for our benefit. The Collect for this day, which is taken from the Epistle, reminds us, that God hath "caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning," and teaches us to pray that we may use them rightly. This declaration of the object for which they were written, is founded upon the assurance of St. Paul, in the Epistle annexed to it, that

"whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." The purport of what we learn from the Holy Scriptures is this: that Almighty God has uniformly willed the happiness of mankind, and, notwithstanding the fall of his erring creatures, has, in all his dispensations, designed their restoration through the atonement of his Son Jesus Christ. With this view we are to hear them, as read and explained by the appointed ministers of Christ. And for better understanding the Scriptures thus heard, we are, with all our ability, to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them; which four terms very clearly show the natural progress of religious knowledge, in an humble and diligent inquiry after truth.

The latter part of the Collect leads our minds to the contemplation of a future life; and is in conformity with the Gospel for the day, which, while it describes, with all their terrific signs, the latter days of Jerusalem, and foretells its destruction by the Roman armies, does also foreshadow those terrors which will usher in the day of judgment. Thus appropriate is the provision which the Church has made, for our devotions, in the Collect for this day. It teaches us to acknowledge, that it is our "blessed Lord" who hath "caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning;" and tends to strengthen our faith in the gracious promises of Almighty God. "Heaven and earth shall pass away;" but not "one jot or one tittle" of his Word shall perish.

THE EPISTLE.—ROM. XV. 4.

The Epistle, from which the Collect is taken, informs us, "that whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning;" that is, that the histories and prophecies of old, as well as later precepts or promises, are all designed for our instruction, "that we, through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope."

The purposes for which St. Paul, in this passage, says the Scriptures were designed, sufficiently direct us how to judge of our improvement, by reading and hearing the Word of God. He tells us, that the proofs to be produced of it, are, "*patience*," and "comfort" and "hope." Would a man then demonstrate that he has profited by the Scriptures? Let him apply these proofs to himself. Has he learned meekness and moderation to those who differ from him? Does he see the ignorance and infirmities of weaker Christians, with temper and compassion; and, instead of censuring and despising, does he labor to enlighten them, and gain upon their affections by methods of gentleness and condescension? Can he bear the reproaches of those who are in the wrong, when he knows himself to be right; can he bear with injuries, for God's sake, and quietly submit to affliction, when Providence lays it upon him? Does he support himself in hardships and temptations, under calumny and causeless contradiction, by the example of a suffering Saviour, and by the other bright patterns of meekness and perseverance, whose trials and praises are recorded in these books? Does he labor diligently for peace and order, charity and godly unity? If he does this, he is indeed instructed and mighty in the Scrip-

tures. But, until the virtues commemorated and commanded there, are made a part of his disposition, and are practised by him, though he "understand all mysteries and all knowledge," 1 Cor. xiii. 2; viii. 2, yet this Apostle tells him assuredly, that he is "nothing," and knows "nothing yet as he ought to know."

THE GOSPEL.—St. Luke xxi. 25.

The Gospel treats of Christ's second coming to judgment; an excellent preparative for the approaching commemoration of his first coming.

The signs of Christ's coming are here given; and, that we may be able to look up, when our redemption draweth nigh, and when the kingdom of God is at hand, we should diligently and with preparation read and meditate upon his Holy Word, as given to us, because, "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away," Matt. xxv. 35.

In the Epistle, the Scriptures are spoken of as already fulfilled; in the Gospel, as now waiting their last accomplishment. The Epistle speaks of Christ, as revealed to all nations. The Gospel is yet to be manifested, in great power from heaven. The subjects of which the Epistle speaks, were once matters of prophecy, and are now matters of history; they were once merely in the written Word and subjects of faith; but now of sight throughout the world. That which the Gospel describes, is still matter of prophecy, received by faith, not by sight. Yet not altogether so: for the Gentiles are not yet fully called in, as the Epistle describes; and the signs of which the Gospel speaks, are now, some of them, ful-

filled. Thus, things which have been, and things which are, and things yet to be, are by the Holy Scriptures interwoven together, and form that "threefold cord" which "is not quickly broken." When we read the Epistle, we look behind, and see what has been fulfilled and is fulfilling in us: in reading the Gospel, we look before, and wait for what is yet to be.

These were the days so often spoken of in the Old Testament, by the prophets, which were to complete the ruin of the Jews; and the prophecy, as alluded to in the Gospel, was delivered by Zechariah, five hundred years before the advent of Christ. St. Matthew says, that it had its accomplishment, when our Lord entered Jerusalem in the manner there described. The prediction was thus literally and most exactly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. Here, in the Gospel, we are assured that his word shall not pass away; and, in view of his future coming to judgment, we should pray, as in the Collect, that we may hear the Scriptures, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISAIAH V.

This chapter contains a general reproof of the Jews, for their ingratitude, impiety, excess and covetousness; for which sins, the prophet denounces God's judgments against them, by the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians. Here is a parable, which, under the similitude of a vineyard, represents the great favors God had bestowed upon them, the disappointment of his expectations from them, and the ruin they had thereby deserved.

"Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard." The words "*well-beloved*" and "*beloved*," in Hebrew, agree, in sound and in signification, and here refer to *the Messias*, who is called *well-beloved*, with respect to his Father, (being the Son of his love), Matt. iii. 17; Col. i. 13; and *beloved*, with respect to his spouse, the Church, known by that title in the Canticles, to which book it is probable the prophet here alludes. But the prophet refers chiefly to the sons of the house of Jacob, and the judgments which were likely to be brought upon them for their sins, and especially for their having ridiculed the prophets and derided them. It is in scorn they call God the Holy One of Israel, because the prophets used, with great veneration, to call him so; "That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it;" *v.* 19. They will not believe the revelation of God's wrath from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness. Unless they see it executed, they will not know it; as if the curse were *a mere alarum*, and al lthe threatenings of the Word were intended only to frighten weak and credulous persons.

See, then, the wisdom of reverencing God's Holy Word, by the "patience and comfort" of which, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; and see how just the ruin will be, because "they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts," *v.* 24, and would not have him to reign over them. And as the law of Moses was rejected and thrown off, so the word of the Holy One of Israel, by his servants *the Prophets*, putting them in mind of his Law, and calling them to obedience, was despised and disregarded. God does not

reject men, for every transgression of his law and word; but, when his word is despised, and his law cast away, what can they expect, but that God should utterly abandon them?

Second Lesson, LUKE I. 39.

As "all holy Scriptures" are "written for our learning," and the prophecies concerning Christ recorded there, "that by patience, and comfort of his holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life," we have here an account of the visit of the Virgin Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, *v.* 39, with the prophecy by Zacharias of our Saviour's coming, *v.* 69: And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David: *as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.*" Prophecy seems to have been almost as early as language; for, the first prediction seems to have been delivered from the Shekinah, immediately after the fall. Lamech used the poetic style; Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied; and, from his days to the destruction of Solomon's temple, the world was not perhaps without a prophet.

In this chapter, is a beautiful instance of the great blessing of God's Holy Word. It was a mercy, not only designed, but declared; and it was intended to show, through all generations, what he spake to our fathers, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent; that God should dwell in the tents of Shem; and particularly what he spake to Abraham, that in his seed "all the families of the earth" shall "be blessed." What God has spoken he will perform.

Zacharias, in blessing God, speaks of the fulfilment of his promises made to the Church; "As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets." His doctrine of salvation by the Messiah, is confirmed by an appeal to the prophets, who spake what is now written; and the greatness and importance of that salvation is thereby evidenced and magnified, 1 Peter i. 10, 11. How sacred the prophecies of this salvation were! The prophets who delivered them, were holy prophets, who dared not deceive, and who aimed at promoting holiness among men; and it was the Holy God himself that spake by them.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISAIAH XXIV.

Here is a general description of the state of that part of the world, especially of the ten tribes, whose country was ruined, and who were carried captive by Shalmaneser under these calamities. But the prophet uses such expressions, as plainly denote the general destruction of the world at the last day; and, indeed, all God's particular judgments are to be considered as earnests and forerunners of the general judgment.

This prophecy has also been supposed to refer also to the like devastation, which, about a hundred years after, Nebuchadnezzar made in the same countries, going from one kingdom to another to conquer them, and lay them waste; for that was the practice of those Eastern nations, in prosecuting their wars.

The consideration of Christ's second coming to judge the world, when he will execute vengeance upon all

those who obey not the Gospel, is here presented to us, to induce us to conform ourselves to the design of Christ's coming, which was that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The promises which are mixed with the threatenings, are intended for the support and comfort of the people of God, in those very calamitous times; and, since there are no particular nations named, by or on whom these desolations should be brought, it may have reference to both these events. The Scripture has many fulfilments; and doubtless, the prophet, from the instances to which he had an eye, designs here to represent, in general, the calamitous state of mankind, and the many miseries which human life is liable to, especially those which attend wars of the nations. Surely the prophets were sent, not only to foretell particular events, but to form the minds of men to virtue and piety; and for that end these prophecies were written and preserved, as all holy Scriptures were "for our learning," and therefore ought not to be looked upon as of private interpretation.

Second Lesson, Rom. xii.

In the preceding chapter, the Apostle had treated of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; and, having spoken of the promised coming of Christ, "there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer," Rom. xi. 26, he now, as a further preparation for that Advent, recommends our principal duties, "to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service," *v.* 1; and then he gives a number of rules for right ordering our conversation, "as becometh the

Gospel." As the sacrifices offered to God were to be free from any spot and blemish, and so to be holy, in like manner are our bodies made a holy sacrifice, when they are kept "in sanctification and honor," we devoting ourselves who are rational creatures to his service, in a manner suitable to our reason.

The exhortations of this chapter may be reduced to three principal heads of Christian duty,—our duty to God, to ourselves, and to our brother. It explains to us the true meaning of godliness, sobriety and righteousness: and, among the principal gifts specified, is that of prophecy, by which is here to be understood the office of preaching the word, 1 Cor. xiv. 1–3; 1 Cor. xi. 4; 1 Thess. v. 20. As to the *matter* of prophesying, or preaching, he recommends, that it should be according to the doctrine of "the proportion of faith," as it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. By this *rule of faith*, the Bereans tried Paul's preaching, Acts xvii. 11; and compare Acts xxvi. 22; Gal. i. 9. We may learn from these excellent rules, recommended by the Apostle in this lesson, the sovereign efficacy of the Scriptures, and our choice privilege to have these "lively oracles" of God in our hands, in days of distress and trouble. "This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me," Psalm cxix. 50. For this, among other great and excellent uses, the Scriptures were written, "that we, through patience, and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope," Rom. xv. 4.

CATECHISM.

"To honor his holy Name and His Word, and to serve him truly all the days of my life."

Our Catechism divides our general duty to God into several particulars: "To believe in him;" "to fear him;" "to love him;" "to worship him;" and, not less, so to honor his holy Name *and his Word*, as not presuming even to speak of the great God in a careless way; preserving, in every expression and action, that reverence which is his due; but especially, "honoring his Word," the law of our lives, and the foundation of our hopes,—by a diligent study, and firm belief, of what it teaches; and by a universal obedience to what it commands. By hearing it: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak," Ps. lxxxv. 8;—by reading it: "Search the Scriptures," John v. 39;—by meditating on it: "Thy Word have I hid in my heart," Ps. cxix. 11; "That I might meditate in thy Word," Ps. cxix. 148; remembering also, to "honor his Word," by listening attentively when it is read and explained in the Church, and especially by our pastors and teachers; and by searching the Scriptures, and meditating on them *daily* in private, bearing always in mind, that mere formal reading and devotion will avail nothing with God, who is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Remember, that, to keep the Word of God, or of Christ, is sacredly to attend thereto, in all our conduct. In him that does so, is the love of God perfected; but his love towards us cannot be perfected, without a practical observance of his Word. See Ps. viii. 1; Neh. ix.

5; 2 Sam. vii. 26; Ps. lxvi. 2; Lev. xix. 12; Rev. xv. 4; Ps. xxix. 2; xcix. 3; Isa. xxx. 21; Ps. cxxxviii. 2; Prov. xiii. 13; Isa. lxvi. 5; Ps. cxix. 161, 162; 1 John ii. 5.

ARTICLE VI.

"Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.(*a*) In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books(*b*) of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church."(*c*)

"And the other Books (as *Hierome* saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine."

The canon of the New Testament, as we now have it, is fully proved, from quotations out of the books of the New Testament, by writers of the first and second centuries, such as Clemens, Ignatius, Justin, and Irenæus.

(*a*) The following references prove that the sacred Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation: Deut. iv. 2; xii. 32; Josh. i. 7; Prov. xxx. 5, 6; John xx. 31; 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17. It sufficiently appears, that God is pleased to require nothing of us, as an article of faith, or necessary to salvation, that is not to be read in the Scriptures, or that cannot fairly be proved from them. "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," Matt. xv. 9; and "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than ye have received, let him be accursed."—Gal. i. 8, 9.—*Fowler.*

(*b*) By a canonical book of Scripture, is meant a book which, being written by divine inspiration, is to be received by us as a part of the *Canon*, or rule, of Christian faith and practice.—*Dr. Bennet.*

(*c*) In the Catholic or Universal Church; for some particular churches did, for some time, doubt of a few of them; namely, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude, the second and third Epistles of St. John, and the Revelation. —*Archdeacon Welchman.*

The names and number of the canonical books are given in the VIth Article.

Next to those authorities, we appeal to the catalogues of the books of the New Testament, that are given to us in the third and fourth centuries, by Origen, a man of great industry, who had examined the state of many churches; by St. Athanasius; and by the Councils of Laodicea and Carthage. After them, there is a constant succession of testimonies, which deliver this as the canon universally received. Add to these things, *first*, that the books of the New Testament were read in all the churches and at all the assemblies, of Christians; so that this was a point in which it was not easy for men to mistake. *Secondly*, that this was so near the fountain, that the originals themselves of the Apostles were no doubt so long preserved. *Thirdly*, that the Jews, as appears from Justin Martyr, and the Gentiles, as appears from Celsus, both knew, that these were the books in which the faith of Christians was contained. *Fourthly*, that some question was made touching some of them; because there was not the same clear or general knowledge of them, that there was of the others; yet upon fuller inquiry, all acquiesced in them. Thus, the canon of the New Testament is fixed upon clear and sure grounds. See 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17; Ps. xix. 7, 8, 9; John xx. 31; 2 Tim. iv. 2, 3, 4; Gal. i. 7, 8, 9; Isa. viii. 20; Prov. xxx. 5, 6; Deut. xii. 32; iv. 2; 2 Pet. i. 21; Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

REFLECTIONS.

In reflecting upon the two-fold coming of our Saviour, as set before us in Holy Scripture, to which the Church directs our attention at this season of Advent, we naturally look, in the first place, to the first coming of

Christ, "to visit us in great humility;" and we may remark the perfect and beautiful *harmony* which prevails between the *Old Testament* and the *New*,—between the prophets and the apostles.

The coming of Christ is the principal subject of the New Testament. That which the prophets foretold in the one, as being about to come to pass concerning the Redeemer, is described by the Apostles, as having actually come to pass in Jesus Christ. And this is the great and standing revelation of God, which is to continue to the end of the world. Let us, then, hear and obey that public revelation of God's will, which, in so much mercy to mankind, he hath been pleased to afford us. This is an inestimable privilege and advantage, which the world was, for many ages, destitute of, having no other guide to conduct them to eternal happiness, than the light of nature, and some particular revelations, which God was now and then pleased to make. But now God hath set up a great and standing light in the world, the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures; and, by the Gospel of his blessed Son, he hath *given the knowledge of salvation unto all men, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace;* to convince us of the error of our ways, and to direct us in our duty. We enjoy all the advantages of divine revelation that the world ever shall have. God, in these last days, hath spoken unto us by his SON; and if we will not hear him, God will employ no other extraordinary prophet and messenger to us; nor have we reason to expect, that he will use any further means to reclaim us. Therefore, those who are not

brought to repentance and effectually persuaded, by this clear and public revelation which God has made of his will to men, in the Holy Scriptures, have reason to look upon their case as desperate.

THE SCRIPTURES.

Mysterious deeps of wisdom dimly known,
Where fathom of man's thought ne'er touch'd the ground,
Who shall thy lessons reach, who shall descry
His steps of light, who, in his boundless word,
The wilderness of waters walks unseen?
In this thy visible house, mankind's abode,
Thy hand withdraws from search of human ken,
Whene'er the depths we trace, there opes beyond
An inner world, where science lifts her torch,
And wonder leads thro' dim enchanted halls,
And glorious links we see of earthly mound.

The Third Sunday in Advent.

THE COLLECT.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at thy first coming didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee—Mark i. 2, 3; Luke i. 76; Mal. iii. 1.

Grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries—1 Cor. iv. 1; 1 Peter iv. 10; 2 Cor. vi. 4.

May likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just—Luke i. 17; Mal. iv. 5, 6; Acts xxvi. 17, 18; Job xxviii. 28; Luke x. 42.

That at thy second coming to judge the world, we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, who livest and reignest with the

Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.—1 Cor. iv. 5; 2 Cor. v. 9, 10; 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14; Heb. iii. 14; Eph. i. 6; Heb. x. 23, 37; Luke x. 42.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

That the labors of God's Ministers may be successful, so that at his second coming we may be found an acceptable people.

The Collect for this day, adverting again to the first coming of Christ in the flesh, and to his second coming to judgment, reminds us, that as there was a messenger to prepare his way for the first, so also are there ministers and stewards to make ready his way for the second coming. It furnishes a prayer, that, as the messenger faithfully discharged his office at Christ's first coming, so the ministers and stewards may perform theirs, by way of preparation for the second. Who that first messenger was, the Gospel informs us. The labor of the ministers and stewards of the mysteries of the Gospel, and the object of that labor, are well expressed in the words of the Collect; they strive to "turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," in order that, at the second coming of the Son of Man "to judge the world," the souls committed to their charge may be found acceptable in his sight, "who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end."

As to the *mysteries* alluded to in the Collect, they are those counsels of the divine will concerning the salvation of lost mankind, which were kept wholly secret from the far greater part of the world, and were discovered only in a small measure even to the Jews; but which are now

fully made known to all mankind, by the Apostles, and by other preachers of the Gospel.

"We speak the wisdom of God in a *mystery*," says the Apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 7; that is, the wisdom hitherto kept secret. But now the secret is explained; is opened, not to the princes of the world,—to them indeed it is as much a secret as ever;—but God, by his Spirit, hath given us information respecting it, and by that we know and understand it. "Stewards of the mysteries of God;" that is, persons intrusted with some of the secrets of God, for the benefit of his Church. So the calling of the Gentiles separately from the Jews, was a *mystery*, a secret,—which no Jew could have thought of, or would have believed, had not God opened, and explained, and enforced it, by his Spirit, Eph. iii. 3, 6. Nor would any Gentile have suggested it. It would have remained unknown and unsuspected.

THE EPISTLE.—1 Cor. iv. 1.

From the Epistle for this day we may learn, who are the officers appointed to prepare and make ready for Christ's coming to judgment; namely, the ministers and stewards of his holy mysteries, who are therefore to be received and respected accordingly. We are instructed to "account of" them "as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," and to think them worthy of double honor, as well for his sake to whom they belong, as for the work's sake in which they are employed.

Their calling is the highest upon earth, their employment the noblest, and their message the most honora-

ble,—the ambassadors of Christ, sent to treat with men about their everlasting peace and salvation. The Apostle gives a short charge to all people, to "know them" that are over them in the Lord, and admonish them, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, 1 Thess. v. 13. And the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts us, to "obey them that have the rule over" us, and submit ourselves; for they watch for our souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, Heb. xiii. 17.

With strict propriety, our Church offers up her prayer, that, as the chosen messenger of the Messiah prepared for the first advent by preaching repentance, so, according to the happy illustration of the apostolic office which St. Paul gives in the Epistle for this day, the appointed ministers and stewards of the mysteries of the Gospel may likewise prepare for the *second* coming of the same Lord, by warning men to flee from the wrath to come, and in this their accepted time to be reconciled to God. Anxious, therefore, to prove themselves faithful in their stewardship,, they preach repentance, and the necessity of a holy life. Both the *labor*, therefore, of the ministers and stewards of the mysteries of the Gospel, and the *object* of it, are well expressed in the words of the Collect.

THE GOSPEL.—St. Matt. xi. 2.

The Gospel shows upon what kind of evidence the Christian religion stands. Miracles performed frequently and publicly before unbelievers and enemies,—were necessary to establish new doctrines and to convert unbelievers; and our Lord proved the power of his

miracles, by showing their agreement with the predictions that such should be wrought by the Messiah. When St. John the Baptist is here said to prepare the way of the Lord before him, we should recollect wherein that preparation consisted. Every one, and especially the ministers of the Gospel, who are messengers sent expressly upon this errand, should be careful to make ready the way for the Lord's second, as the harbinger did for his first, coming. The preparations are in both cases the same, making the guilty sensible of their sins, and reproving open wickedness; unmasking hypocrisy, and subduing spiritual pride; calling men to repentance by representing, with a faithful zeal, the great evils and dreadful end of a wicked course of life, and the terrors of that Master who, at his coming to purge the floor, will not fail to separate the wheat from the chaff, and will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Ministers may well take St. John the Baptist for an example, in giving weight to their doctrines by a life of severe virtue; by boldly rebuking vice, even in the greatest men, when duty and a proper opportunity call for it. And, if by this they fall under displeasure, they are to be willing to suffer with a constancy like his, even at death bearing testimony to God and his truth. As it is especially the duty of ministers of Christ, to act with vigor and constancy in this course of duty, so the blessed effects of reforming mankind are of such eminent importance, as to deserve our daily fervent prayers, that God would promote and prosper their good work. And this our Church has taught us to recommend to the divine favor and assistance, in the Collect for this day.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISAIAH XXV.

Some parts of the preceding chapter having a relation to the end of the world, we may, without destroying the connection of the prophecy, suppose the triumphant hymns, in this and the next chapter, principally to refer to that event, and to be of the same nature with those recorded, Rev. xi. 17, xv. 3, xix. 6. The prophet, as a minister and steward of God's mysteries, here resolves that he will himself praise God; and they who would excite others should, in the first place, stir up themselves to praise: "O Lord, thou art my God."

In praising God, we exalt him, by celebrating his attributes, Exod. xv. 2. Here the "turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just" is properly represented by a feast, *v.* 6, "And in this mountain (called Mount Zion) shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast." God's calling men by his grace, is often expressed in Scripture by inviting them to a feast, Prov. ix. 2; Matt. xxii. 4.

The Jewish temple stood upon Mount Moriah, 2 Chron. iii. 1. It is here metaphorically taken for the Church, which Daniel prophesies should become a great mountain and fill the earth, Dan. ii. 35. The place is Mount Zion; thence the *preaching* of the Gospel takes rise. The preachers (ministers and stewards of God's mysteries) must begin at Jerusalem; for there shall the Gospel commence, by which God shall bring all nations from the ignorance of heathenism to the knowledge of the true God. And we have here a prophecy of the

salvation and grace brought to us by Christ; that the world should be freed from that darkness of ignorance and error, in the mists of which it had been so long lost and buried: "he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering," *v.* 7, with which all people were covered or blindfolded; "a veil spread over all nations," for they all sat in darkness. But this veil the Lord will destroy, by the light of his *Gospel* shining in the world, and the power of his Spirit opening men's eyes to receive it.

Second Lesson, LUKE III. 1–19.

"The word of God came," *v.* 2. These are the very words applied to the prophets of the Old Testament, "The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah," i. 2; iv. 11; to Ezekiel, and to other prophets. Shall we then think, that this forerunner of the Messiah spake "the word of the Lord" as did the prophets of the Old Testament, and that the prophets and apostles of the New Testament (the ministers and stewards of God's mysteries), on whom the Holy Ghost descended, to enable them to teach the mind of Christ to all future ages of the Church, should not speak and write what they delivered as the rule of faith, by like divine assistance?

Here is the fulfilling of the Scriptures, in the ministry of St. John. The other Evangelists referred to the same text that is here referred to, Esaias xl. 3. Among the words of Esaias it is found, that there should be the voice of one crying in the wilderness; and John is that voice, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low," *v.* 4, 5; referring to

the custom of Eastern kings, before whom, when they travelled, waymen were sent to make plain the way, by filling up deep places, and levelling those that were high. Baruch says, God hath commanded or appointed, that "every high hill, and banks of long continuance, should be cast down, and valleys filled up, that Israel may go safely in the glory of God," v. 7. When God led his people out of captivity through the great desert to the land of promise, a highway was made for him, riding in the cloud before them; so when Christ comes to proclaim liberty to the captives of sin and Satan, and to lead them through the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Canaan, a voice is again heard in the wilderness, saying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Thus should his ministers and stewards now prepare and make ready his way for his second coming to judgment.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISAIAH XXVIII., to *v.* 23.

The beginning of this chapter denounces God's judgments against the ten tribes, carried captive some years before several of the prophecies were delivered. In the seventh and following verses, he severely reproves the two other tribes, for their excess, their ignorance, and their contempt of the threatenings denounced against their sins, which they fondly presumed that they could, by their cunning and management, evade and escape. "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine?" *v.* 9. The prophet here, as elsewhere, upbraids the people's ignorance, and care-

less neglect of instruction. If the teachers, says he, were perfectly well qualified to instruct, there are none that will learn.

The scoffers mentioned in verse 14, "wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men," seem to be introduced here as uttering their sententious speeches. What, they say, does he treat us as little children, always inculcating some new rudiments of knowledge, "precept upon precept, line upon line?" *v.* 10. God may be supposed, by his prophet, to retort upon their own contemptuous mockery, turning it to a sense different from that which they intended. Yes, says he, it shall be as you say; ye shall be taught by a strange tongue and stammering lip; ye shall be carried into a strange country, and be obliged to learn like children. God had warned the Jews, by his prophets, that their safety and security depended wholly on their trust in God; but they rejected the gracious warning, with contempt and mockery. They are now threatened with his judgment,—a lesson to us, how to receive instruction, and to reverence those whose duty it is, as the ministers and stewards of God's mysteries, to prepare and make ready the way.

Second Lesson, ROMANS XIV.

As a preparation for our Lord's coming, we here have directions for our conduct towards one another in sacred things, particularly as to our different apprehensions of indifferent things, in the management of which, it seems, there was something amiss among the Roman Christians to whom the Apostle wrote, which he here labors to re-

dress. But the rules are general, and of permanent use in the Church, for the preservation of that Christian love which he had so earnestly commended, in the foregoing chapter, as the fulfilling of the law. And if we are truly desirous "to be found at his second coming an acceptable people," we are assured, that "he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men."

In this chapter, the apostle makes plain the outward ceremonial observances, and teaches, that there is nothing unclean of itself, but only through the mistaken estimation of the Jew, *v.* 14. He elsewhere teaches, that the Jewish feasts, new moons, and Sabbaths, were only "shadows of good things to come," and that Christ was the body or the substance of them, Col. ii. 17; and that then was made a disannulling of the former command, by reason of the weakness and unprofitableness of it, Heb. vii. 18.

As the Collect prays, that the ministers and stewards of Christ's mysteries may so prepare and make ready his way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, we may here observe, that his way is prepared and made ready, and the hearts of the disobedient turned, through their agency, not by ceremonial observances, not by being of any party or persuasion, nor by keeping holy-days, but by fearing God and working righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

CATECHISM.

"To submit myself to all my governors, teachers, *spiritual pastors*," that is, ministers of God's Word and ordinances.

This is a duty included in the fifth commandment, as one of those in the second table, which we owe not only to our parents but to all our superiors; and they offend against it, who neither reverence the persons, obey the precepts, nor care for the authority, of their pastors, and who deny them maintenance, Matt. x. 14; Heb. xiii. 7, 17; 1 Tim. v. 17; Gal. vi. 6. It becomes us, to pray that we may not be found wanting in this duty, and that the labors of our spiritual pastors may be successful,—paying not a superstitious but a decent and respectful regard to them. "Know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;" and "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake," 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me, Luke x. 16.

Reverence them, as Joash, king of Israel, did the prophet Elisha, 2 Kings xiii. 14; and as Elisha himself did his master Elijah; especially if they can say of you, as St. Paul said of the Corinthians, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel," 1 Cor. iv. 15. When the Jews "mocked the messengers of God," and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

See 1 Chron. xxv. 8; Gal. iv. 1, 2; Prov. v. 10–13;

Eph. iv. 11; 1 Cor. iv. 1; Mal. ii. 7; Heb. xiii. 7, 17; Gal. vi. 6; 1 Cor. ix. 7, 13, 14; 1 Tim. v. 17; Phil. ii. 29; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16; 1 Thess. iv. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 18; Col. iii. 22–25; Titus ii. 9, 10; 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2; Eph. vi. 5, 6.

ARTICLE XXIII.

It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord's vineyard.

This article consists of two parts: the former asserts the unlawfulness of exercising the public offices of religion without a regular appointment; and the latter relates to the authority by which ministers are to be appointed.

Since the ministers of the Word and Sacraments are "ambassadors for Christ" and "ministers of God," 2 Cor. v. 20; vi. 4, they must necessarily receive their authority from God and be sent by him; but they must not assume that authority to themselves, unless they are called to it by God. And since God our Saviour, from the time when he called the Apostles, has not immediately called any one to the ministry, it follows that they must be called by those whose business it is to call others. Thus the Apostles ordained presbyters and bishops; and the bishops ordained by the Apostles did thenceforth ordain others. From the fact, that ministers of the Word and Sacraments are called in Scrip-

ture "ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," 1 Cor. iv. 1, it follows, that they ought to receive their commission from God and to be sent by him.

Should any man take upon him the character of an ambassador to an earthly prince; should he offer terms of peace to enemies, pretend to naturalize strangers, and grant pardons, without a commission from his sovereign, all his acts would be null and void, his conduct highly criminal, and his person liable to the severest punishment.

See Jer. xxiii. 21; Heb. v. 4, 5; Lev. viii.; Num. xvi. 3, 35, 38; 2 Chron. xxvi. 16–20; Mark iii. 14; Luke x. 1; John xx. 21; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Acts i. 21, 22; xiii. 2, 3; Gal. i. 1; 2 Cor. v. 18, 20; Acts xiv. 21, 22, 23; Titus i. 5; 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6; ii. 2; Acts xx. 28; Matt. ix. 37, 38.

REFLECTIONS.

If Christ's ministers are to make ready the way for his second coming, we should diligently hearken to them, and receive their message. The words they deliver are from God, and therefore are to be received with all reverence, and to be counted worthy of all honor. The work which God hath given ministers to do in the world, consists in using their time and exertions, to promote the salvation of others. They are especially commissioned and appointed for this work, and are ambassadors for Christ, to beseech men, in his stead, to be reconciled to God. They should therefore be vigilant and industrious in the work, whether we

consider the nature of their employment or the glorious reward of it.

But, though the work of promoting the salvation of others be chiefly incumbent upon those whose office it is to perform this duty, we all are concerned in it according to the advantages and opportunities which we possess. Every man is concerned in the salvation of his brother, and should not let him perish if he can help it. It is in every man's power to contribute something to this blessed work of saving others, by seasonable counsel and advice, by kind and gentle reproof, but especially by a holy and exemplary conversation, and a virtuous life, which has a silent power of persuasion, and a secret attraction which allures others to the imitation of it. What dignity hath God stamped on Gospel ordinances, in making them the means by which Christ speaks to perishing souls. To neglect and contemn the messengers of Christ, is to fly in the face of Christ, who gave them their commission. Christ speaks by his ministers, Jer. xv. 19; and the word preached is his appointed instrument to convey to our souls spiritual life, the best of blessings.

THE PRIEST.

The holy in himself, and virtuous,
He still to sinful men was mild and piteous:
Not of reproach imperious or malign;
But in his teaching soothing and benign.
To draw them on to heaven, by reason fair
And good example, was his daily care.
But were there one perverse and obstinate,
Were he of lofty or of low estate,

Him would he sharply with reproof astound;
A better priest is no where to be found.
He waited not on pomp or reverence,
Nor made himself a spiced conscience.
The love of Christ and his Apostles twelve
He taught; but, first, he followed it himselve.

The Fourth Sunday in Advent.

THE COLLECT.

O Lord, raise up, we pray thee, thy power, and come among us, and with great might succor us.—Ps. lxxx. 2: Isa. li. 9; Ps. xxii. 19; Isa. xl. 29.

That whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us.—Ps. lxxxi. 10; Rom. vii. 5, 23; Isa. xxxviii. 14; Heb. xii. 1; Ps. cxix. 32.

Thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us.—Ps. lxx. 1; xl. 13, 17; xliv. 26; xxxi. 2; 2 Cor. xii. 9.

Through the satisfaction of thy Son our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be honor and glory world without end. Amen.—1 John ii. 1, 2; Isa. liii. 4, 5, 6, 12; Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

Prayer for grace and mercy to HELP AND DELIVER *us in our Christian course.*

This day being the Sunday immediately preceding the Nativity of our Lord, the Church calls upon us to expect him with joy, and to meet him with exultation.

The Collect for the day prays, that God would afford us the powerful assistance of his grace, so that we may not be retarded by our sins, but "may run with patience the race that is set before us." God is said to "raise" or "stir up his power," when he exerts or exhibits it in a remarkable manner; Ps. lxxx. 2; Deut. xxxiii. 2. The Collect for last week, spoke of the messengers and stewards of Christ's mysteries; and that for the preceding week, spoke of the holy Scriptures, as "preparing the way;" but the Collect on this day speaks of Christ himself, coming among us with great power, to succor us as sore let and hindered by our sins. This Collect follows the last, with peculiar force. As in that, supplication was made that the appointed ministers of the Gospel might preach effectually, to the saving of the souls of men, so in this, a most necessary confession is made, that we are unable to become holy, without the special grace of God; for, strive as we will for the mastery, our *toil* is *great*, our *strength weak* and *uncertain*. We are instructed to cry unto the Lord in our trouble, "Lord, raise up, we pray thee, *thy* power, and come among us, and with great might succor us."

This prayer implies also a proper confession of our faith. We confess, that we should faint in our course, and lose the prize of our high calling, if he raise not up his power in our hearts by the comfort of his holy Word, and by the good influence of his Spirit, and come among us, "a present God in time of trouble." We confess, that we have a firm trust in his bountiful *grace* and *mercy*, for such help and deliverance, and *that* speedily, through the satisfaction of his Son our Lord, who died to save us from all sin, to gain for us all needful spiritual help, and to make us at last more than con-

querors. As it is only by the grace of Almighty God that we can in any degree "cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light," so it is only through his merits that our deficiencies can be supplied, in our imperfect attempt to cast away the one, and invest ourselves with the other. To this the Church directs our notice, especially in the Collect for this Sunday, instructing us to supplicate the Almighty Father, that, "whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us," his "bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us."

THE EPISTLE.—Phil. iv. 4.

The Church, on this day, selects St. Paul's affectionate Epistle to his beloved Philippians. The Christian's joy is not of this world, but is spiritual and heavenly. When he says, This peace shall "keep your hearts and minds *through Christ Jesus*," it is making him the sanctuary of our thoughts, our refuge, our stronghold. The Epistle recommends to us, that we rejoice in the Lord, and "let our moderation be known unto all men," in view of that great event, expressed in the words, "the Lord is at hand," *v.* 5.

Moderation, in the moral sense of the word, belongs only to things wherein we are subject to a vicious excess, beyond the rule or measure which Scripture prescribes for the regulation of our actions and passions. Though ye are sufferers with me, saith the Apostle, for the sake of Christ, yet "rejoice alway," *v.* 4. Be not anxious about any temporal concerns, but let your

moderation as to these things "be known unto all men," for "the Lord is at hand," to protect, preserve, support you. To reward patience and resignation, the Apostles use other similar expressions: "Behold, the Judge standeth before the door," James v. 9; The day of the Lord is near, Heb. x. 25, &c.

These expressions are chiefly used in the Epistles directed to Jewish churches, who were no strangers to these phrases, and who were well acquainted with a fearful Advent of the Lord to punish the rebellions and infidelity of their nation. There is also frequent mention of the time and day of the coming of the Lord, Matt. iii. 10; and our Saviour devotes a whole chapter to "that day," Matt. xxiv. 36, and the "coming of the Son of man," *v.* 27, 37; "the coming of the Lord," *v.* 42. The fitness of these exhortations to meekness and patience, or moderation, on account of the nearness of that day, and the Advent of the Lord, to punish the unbelieving Jews, will be apparent from this consideration, that they were the chief persecutors of those of their own nation who embraced the Christian faith, Rom. xv. 31; 1 Thess. ii. 14.

The peace of God, most naturally imports the peace and reconciliation which we have with God through faith in Christ. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God;" hence, the Gospel which proclaims pardon and justification to believers, is styled "the Gospel of Peace," Eph. vi. 5. The sense of these words would seem to be, the experience of the divine favor (grace and mercy), and the inward peace and security which arise from it, shall be sufficient to keep you steadfast in the faith of Christ. He promised not deliverance from calamities, but inward peace and tranquillity of

mind under them; and that, as the effect of constant prayer and a sense of the divine favor.

THE GOSPEL.—St. John i. 19.

On last Sunday, the Collect spoke of the messenger sent before to prepare the way of Christ; and, in consequence, the Gospel for that day was of Christ's bearing testimony to St. John the Baptist, his messenger. But the Gospel for to-day speaks of the Baptist's bearing testimony to Christ himself, and with very peculiar fitness for this Sunday; for he is bearing witness to Christ and to his Godhead, just before we acknowledge his appearing on Christmas-day. While Christ was among them, unknown, and not yet manifested, even so it is now; he is among us, but unseen. We wait for his great Advent.

The Gospel gives a further account of St. John the Baptist, in the discharge of his office as our Lord's harbinger, and in the testimony which he bore to him. We pray in the Collect, that "the Lord would raise up his power, and come among us, and with great might succor us." Here the Baptist is represented as crying, "Make straight the way of the Lord;" that is, 1st. He came to correct the mistake of a people concerning the ways of God: it is certain that they are right ways; but the Scribes and Pharisees, with their glosses upon the law, have made them crooked. John the Baptist calls the people to the original rule.—2d. He came to prepare and dispose men for the reception of Christ and his Gospel. It is in allusion to the cry of the harbinger of a prince, "Make way!" When God is coming toward

us, we must prepare to meet him, and let the Word of the Lord have free course.

Presumption and pride are mountains which raise themselves in the way. We presume upon mercy, boast of a shorter way to heaven, and abuse that refreshing text of St. Paul's, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," Rom. v. 20. Where sin is felt and repented of, there God's grace is greater than our sin, both in imputation and effect. But when "we draw iniquity with cords of vanity;" when, as without remorse, we sin presumptuously; when we speak good of evil and evil of good; when we do not use efforts to remove the stumbling-blocks which pride and presumption have thrown in the way,—then assuredly the more sin, the less grace. Shall we continue then in sin, that grace may abound? God has forbidden it, enjoining us "to be holy as he is holy." Being delivered from the hands of all our enemies, we are to serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISAIAH XXX.

The Egyptians were the Jews' confederates, at the time of Sennacherib's invasion, and were often reproved for that confederacy, and for placing their chief trust in an arm of flesh, xx. 5; xxxi. 1. This is the subject of the former part of the chapter. Then follow some gracious promises, which have a plain reference to Gospel times; and, from the 27th verse, a description of God's vengeance, devouring the Assyrian army like fire, and

entirely consuming it. After showing the folly of vainly trusting in Egypt, and fleeing upon horses, there is a promise of *grace* and *mercy*, "And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be *gracious* unto you," *v.* 18; "and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have *mercy* upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him." That is, God will wait, until the judgments he has threatened have had their due effect, for reforming your lives, and rendering you suitable objects of mercy. He will show his power, in those judgments which he brings upon you, in order to your reformation and to his receiving you again into favor. The words may be explained of God's magnifying his *mercy* towards an undeserving people, that where men's sins did abound, his grace did much more abound.

From the 18th to the 27th verse are foretold and described, in sublime and figurative prophetic language, the many and great privileges and blessings of the Christian religion, the abundance of grace and mercy, of light and glory, peace and comfort, purity and holiness, which should be shed abroad in the hearts of all true believers in Christ. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold," *v.* 26. This is not improperly applied, by many, to the light which the Gospel brought into the world, to them "that sat in darkness," which as far exceeded the Old Testament light, as the radiance of the sun does the light of the moon, and which proclaims *healing to the broken-hearted*, and *the binding up of their wounds.*

Second Lesson, MATT. III. 2–13.

According to the custom which prevailed in Eastern countries, of making the ways level and straight before princes and great men, who moved on their course with great pomp and magnificence, John the Baptist was, in a spiritual sense, *to go before the Lord*,—before the Saviour of the world, to prepare and make ready the way. He was to make his paths straight; to remove out of the minds of men every thing that opposed itself to the admission of divine truth,—all prejudice, blindness, pride, obstinacy, self-conceit, vanity, and vain philosophy,—but, above all, to subdue and regulate those depraved affections, appetites, passions, and inveterate habits of wickedness, which are the grand obstacles to conversion and to the reception of the Word of God, and which are, in the language of the Collect for the day, "the sins and wickedness" by which we "are sore let and hindered, in running the race that is set before us."

The exhortation, therefore, of John was, "Repent ye;" renounce those vices and abominations which at present blind your eyes and cloud your understandings, and then you will be able to see the truth and bear the light. "The kingdom of heaven, is at hand." The kingdom of heaven frequently signifies the coming of the Messiah, to erect his spiritual kingdom, with the benefits belonging to those who should by faith in him become members of that kingdom, and would be governed by his laws, as in Matt. iv. 17; x. 7; Luke x. 9. In other places, it is doubtful, whether it refers to the times of the preaching of the Gospel and the erecting of Christ's kingdom, or to the first and higher sense of the kingdom of heaven, as the kingdom into which the righteous shall

enter at the great day of redemption, as in Matt. v. 3, 19, 20; vi. 33; Mark x. 14, 15, 23. The Gospel dispensation for the covenant of *Grace*, the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is a spiritual kingdom; its original is from Heaven, its tendency is to Heaven. John preached this as at hand; to us it comes by the pouring out of the Spirit, and the full exhibition of the riches of Gospel grace.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, Isaiah xxxii.

We have the promise here, *v.* 3, that "the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken." God shall plentifully afford men the light of his truth, and give them *grace* to make a good use of the instruction he vouchsafes to them. That this promise relates to the times of the Gospel, will appear by comparing it with ch. xxix. 18; xxxv. 5. By the "pouring out of God's Spirit," *v.* 15, is signified the plentiful effusion of his grace (Joel xi. 28; Zech. xii. 10); and the promise of his *mercy* in what follows, "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever: and my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation," *v.* 17, 18. The effect of God's goodness and men's reformation shall be peace within, and freedom from a hostile invasion without.

The 9th, 10th, and following verses of this chapter, relate to the calamities which the Assyrian invasion

brought upon Judea, under those afflictions. The wisdom and piety of Hezekiah, was a chief support and comfort to his subjects; and consequently we may suppose, that the beginning of the chapter contains a character of that excellent prince. But there are several expressions which relate to happier times than Hezekiah ever lived to enjoy. It was designed to make men sensible, how happy they were under his administration, to improve its advantages, and to direct them to look for the kingdom of Christ and the times of reformation which that kingdom should introduce.

With this lesson before us, and while we pray that "the Lord would come among us, and with great might succor us," we should endeavor to realize, that the work of righteousness produces peace, *v.* 17; that righteousness, cultivated by peace, produces tranquillity of mind and permanent security. If we have that principle, and cultivate it, we shall have peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and a sure and certain hope of life everlasting.

Second Lesson, 1 Cor. 1.

The true character of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whose advent we now expect, is given in this chapter. St. Paul here disclaims being the leader of a sect, but professes to be only a preacher of the cross. He exhibits its doctrine, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, the power of God. The lesson commences with the Apostle's benediction and assurance of God's blessing,—"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. V

thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," *v.* 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

It is unadvisedly said by some, that the words "Grace be unto you, and peace," are a wish and not a prayer. But the first import of the phrase is, as mentioned in 2 Pet. i. 2, and Jude *v.* 2, Grace and peace be multiplied to you from God the Father. This is to pray for it, and also to desire the same blessings from God the Son. They had St. Paul's example, not only for wishing but for praying, in these words: "For this thing I besought the Lord (Christ) thrice," "and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Cor. xii. 8–10. Here the context seems to restrain the phrase, "The grace of God which is given you," to the favor of God shown to the Corinthians in vouchsafing these spiritual gifts, which is a frequent import of this phrase in Scripture, Rom. xii. 6. "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," Eph. iv. 7.

After asserting his apostolical character, he thanks God for the gifts and graces which had been conferred upon the Corinthians; and he assures them, that God, being faithful to his promises, would not forsake "the works of his own hands," but would confirm them, and preserve them blameless to the coming of the Lord Jesus; and then, while he laments their contentions, *v.* 11, he reprobates any schism in the Church.

CATECHISM.

"I pray unto God to give me his *grace*, that I may continue in the same unto my life's end."

By the grace of God, which we here pray for, is meant that influence and assistance of God's Spirit, which he has promised to give us, upon our devout prayer to him for it. This grace, concurring with our own diligent endeavors, renders the conditions of the Gospel not only possible, but in some measure easy to be performed. We pray for God's grace to keep us in the state of salvation, because, unless God's grace doth remain with us, we may fall into a total apostasy, and unbelief; and so be deprived even of the means of salvation. Should he not afford us grace to perform the conditions required by the Gospel, we can have no pretence to the promises of it. The grace of God, in this life, never raises man to a perfect and unsinning obedience; but it makes him a "new creature," Gal. vi. 15; creates in him a sincere obedience to the whole Gospel; and shuts the door against all temptations and security, sloth, presumption, hypocrisy, *partial* obedience, and habitual progress in sin. It teaches and enables us to crucify the flesh; and, upon our falling, it quickens us to bewail our infirmities,—for Christ's sake, to beg of our heavenly Father forgiveness, and ever after to amend whatever is amiss.

In this sense, a generous man, assisted, or rather informed, by "the special grace of God," (Luke i. 74, 75), may, indeed must, walk in the commandments of

God and serve him. This is the condition of the second covenant; and God's grace, shed over a good man's heart, enables him to perform it. His obedience, when it is truly and faithfully rendered, though mixed with much weakness and imperfection, and many sins (if there be no wilfulness and impenitence), God has promised to accept and to crown. John xv. 5; 2 Cor. xii. 9; iii. 5; 1 Cor. xv. 10; 1 Pet. v. 5.

ARTICLE XVII.

"They through *grace* obey the calling,".... "and at length, by God's *mercy*, they attain to everlasting felicity."

The everlasting purposes of God with respect to man, are set forth in this article, and show the manner of God's perfecting this great work, that is, by his *grace* and *mercy*. The Church says, first, that those whom he endued with so excellent a benefit, are "called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season." That is, they are inwardly moved and prompted by God's grace to the performance of his will; they, "through grace obey the calling;" that is, they are effectually wrought and prevailed upon thereby. "They be justified freely;" that is, they are esteemed righteous by God, who extends his free mercy to them for Christ's sake. "They be made sons of God by adoption:" that is, they come to the possession of that inheritance which their elder brother Christ hath purchased for them with his blood. "They be made like the image of his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works," for without holiness no man shall see the

Lord; "and at length, by God's *mercy*, they attain to everlasting felicity."

God, "who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9; "being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Rom. iii. 24. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" "that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life," Titus iii. 5, 7. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," Jude *v.* 21. In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore, Ps. xvi. 11. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

REFLECTIONS.

God is not only described as abounding in love and goodness to us, but also as being our only support and strength; the author and giver of all the powers of body and mind which we possess; the fountain of grace and goodness in us, without whose aid we can do nothing that is pleasing to him. He will, therefore, not

withdraw from us that grace and strength without which we can do nothing that is good; that Holy Spirit, without whose inspiration we cannot have a good thought. To leave us to ourselves, would counteract the goodness of his intention, the designs of his love, towards us; and would make us as sure a prey to temptations, as if an eternal decree of reprobation had passed against us. If men looked to the corruption of their hearts, to the strength of the passions and lusts which they inherit; to the force of temptations which daily assault them; to the little care they take to obey God by doing his will; to their neglect of prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit; to their disregard of the public worship and Sacraments of the Church (the means and instruments of God's *grace* and blessing); to their contempt of Christian self-denial, mortification, and fasting; to the scope which they give to all worldly and selfish desires; they would find the true sources of all their wickedness and impenitency: they need not charge them to the all-gracious, all-righteous God of heaven and earth.

Let us hope, then, that if our prayer for God's "bountiful grace and mercy" be humble and fervent, faithful and sincere, it may be answered by a needful supply of strength and refreshment, to enable us to renew our toil, and to run with patience the race that is set before us; whilst we look always unto Christ our *example*, as well as our *sacrifice*, who has run the same course of trial, and who is not only the author, but the finisher of our faith.

GRACE AND MERCY.

SONG OF ANGELS.

Peace be upon earth below;
Nature smoothed her mournful brow,
When she saw the gleaming bow
Which compassed the dark place
With the covenant of *Grace:*
Oft, as down heaven's cloudy stair
Comes that harbinger so fair,
Glad earth with incense breathing dew
Her veil of sorrow through,
Looks tearfully to heaven and grateful smiles anew.

MEN AND ANGELS.

Good will to man from God above;
A little while I hid my face,
But *Mercy* shall to thee abound
Firm as the mountains in their place;
With everlasting arms around,
Yea, the strong mountain's firm array
And hills shall pass away,
But in that hour my love shall stand with thee,
Rising from mists of time a mansion strong and free.

Christmas-Day.

CHRISTMAS CAROL.

What sudden blaze of song
  Spreads o'er the expanse of heaven!
In waves of light it thrills along,
  The Angelic signal given,—
Glory to God! from central fire
Flows out the echoing lay beyond the starry quire,

Like circles widening round
  Upon a clear blue river,
Orb after orb, the wondrous sound
  Is echoed on forever;
Glory to God on high, on earth be peace,
And love towards men of love,—salvation and release.

CHRISTMAS-DAY.

THIS is a high festival, in commemoration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is of great antiquity; and to it the season of Advent is an Introduction.

It has been remarked, by the author of "Primitive Christianity," that the first fruits of it are to be discovered in the second century; and so Chrysostom writes, "This day was of great antiquity, and of long continuance, being famous in the Church, from the beginning." It was observed religiously in the time of Gregory Nazianzen and St. Basil, both of whom had sermons on the occasion. (*a*) (*b*.)

Learned men, however, have differed, with respect to the day and month of our Saviour's nativity. The greatest part of the Eastern Church, for the first three or four centuries, kept this feast on the sixth day of January, now called the Epiphany, denoting Christ's manifestation to the world in four several respects,

(*a*) This festival is called God's appearance, or his Nativity.—*Greg. Nas.* We name this festival the Theophany.—*St. Basil.*

(*b*) St. Augustine asserts, that it was the custom of the Church to keep this day. —*August.*, Epist. 19.

which, at first, were all commemorated on this day. These were: *first*, by his nativity or incarnation, which was the appearance of God manifest in the flesh;—*secondly*, by the appearance of the star which guided the wise men unto Christ at his birth,—the Epiphany or manifestation of him to the Gentiles;—*thirdly*, by the glorious appearance that was made at his baptism, when the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form, and in the manner of a dove, and lighted upon him, and a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;"—*fourthly*, by the appearance or manifestation of his divinity when by his first miracle he turned the water into wine, at the marriage of Cana in Galilee.

It is beyond dispute, that this day was observed as our Saviour's birth-day, for several ages, by the Churches of Egypt, Jerusalem, Antioch, Cyprus, and by other Churches in the East. But, before the time of the Council of Ephesus, A. D. 431, the Egyptians had altered the day of the Nativity to that which corresponds with the 25th day of our December; at a time somewhat earlier, the Churches of Antioch and Syria had made the same alteration; and, thenceforth, according to the testimony of St. Chrysostom, they continued to celebrate the Nativity and the Epiphany on distinct days. (*a*)

(*a*) *Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Book xx. c. iv. § 2.—The Church of Rome, professing to derive its information from the Tax-Rolls of *Augustus Cæsar*, has constantly adhered to the 25th day of December. "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed," Luke ii. 1. See *H. L'Estrange*, All. Div. Off., p. 185.—Chrysostom wrote, in a sermon on the 132d Psalm, not only that the keeping of Christmas-day was ancient even from the earliest times, but that the Church kept the true day, i. e., the 25th day of December.

In the Western Church, this distinction has ever been made; the 25th day of December having been originally fixed on by that Church, for some cause which is not obvious. It is nevertheless certain, that, about the year 500, this was the rule of the Church Catholic.

The manner in which the festival of Christ's Nativity was kept in the early Church, evinced the greatest veneration. It is always mentioned, by Christian writers, as the chief festival, and the occasion of all others. Chrysostom styles it "the most venerable and solemn, and the mother of all festivals," adding, that "from this the Epiphany, the Holy Paschal-feast, the Assumption or Ascension, and Pentecost derived their origin."

The day was observed, with the same religious solemnity as the Lord's day. Sermons were always preached upon it, of which numerous examples are still extant, in the works of many ancient writers. Nor was the day ever suffered to pass, without a solemn Communion. Liberty was granted to servants, to rest from their ordinary labors, as on the Lord's day; and, as on that day, all fasting was prohibited, and also all public shows and games. It has been supposed, that the very design of appointing the festivals of Christ's Nativity, and Epiphany, at this season of the year, was chiefly to oppose the vanities and exercises in which, on their periodical days of mirth and rejoicing at this season, pagans were accustomed to indulge.

The festival of the Nativity, having been thus appointed for observance in the several Christian Churches, was annually solemnized throughout Christendom, until the epoch of the Reformation. At that period, some of the

Reformed Churches thought proper to discontinue the solemnizing of this day, as well as of other days, in their zeal for abolishing all ordinances of human institution, and what they were pleased to call superstitious observances. Other Churches, however, approved of and retained the celebration of this, in common with other festivals, which commemorated the principal events in our Lord's life. This was the case with the Helvetian and Bohemian Churches, according to their respective confessions of faith. The canons of the Synod of Dort also, confirmed by their Synodical Act, in 1619,(*a*) established the observance of this day, as a rule for the churches of Belgium; and if, in the meantime, the Church of Geneva abrogated this festival, it was effected without the knowledge and against the wish of Calvin, who afterwards exerted himself for the restoration of the observance.(*b*)

The practice of our own Church has been according to the example of early antiquity, and of the Catholic Church of Christ; and is calculated to continue the remembrance of the great event commemorated. At the same time, it serves to impress her members with a lively sense of the important doctrines which she now

(*a*) It appears by the Acts of that Synod that its session was intermitted, from Dec. 22d to the 28th. Festum Natalis Domini nostri Jesu Christi instabat; propter cujus celebrationem actiones Synodi per aliquot jam dies interdum pendæ essent. The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ was now at hand; in order to the celebration of which the actions of the Synod were for some few days to be suspended. Sess. 36, Dec. 19; and see the canons of that Church, Can. 63.

(*b*) Calvin apologizes thus: Sancte testari possum, me inscio, ac ne optante quidem, hanc rem fuisse transactum. I can solemnly protest, that this was transacted without my knowledge; nay, was against my wish. And again: Ex quo revocatus sum, hoc temperamentum quæ sivi, ut Christi Natalis celebraretur vestro more. From the very first of my return to this place, I endeavored this moderation, that Christ's birth-day should be observed after your custom.

Epist. *Hallero;* and see *H. L'Estrange*, All. Div. Off., p. 136.

more especially teaches; and it affords a specimen of the piety, wisdom, and moderation, by which her liturgical provisions are distinguished.

Christmas-Day.

THE COLLECT.

Almighty God, who hast given thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him; John iii. 16; 1 John iv. 14; Heb. ii. 16; John i. 14; 1 Tim. iii. 16; 1 John iv. 9.

And as at this time to be born of a pure virgin; Isa. vii. 14; Matt. i. 22, 23; Luke i. 26, 27; Matt. i. 24, 25.

Grant that we being regenerate, John iii. 3, 4, 5; Rom. vi. 3, 4; Col. ii. 11, 12; 2 Cor. v. 17; Col. iii. 9, 10; 2 Cor. iv. 11.

And made thy children by adoption and grace, John i. 12, 13; Gal. iv. 4, 5, 6.

May daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen. Tit. iii. 5; Eph. iv. 23; Rom. xii. 2; 1 Pet. i. 22; 2 Cor. iv. 16; Isa. xi. 31.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

Union of God and Man: Incorporation of Christians, or Baptismal Regeneration.

The Collect for this day, after ascribing to Almighty God the Gift of his "only-begotten Son, who was born of a pure virgin, to take our nature upon him," (the union of God and Man,) consists of three parts or clauses, wherein we pray: 1,—That we being regenerate or in-

corporated into Christ's Church; 2,—and made his children by adoption and grace, or having received the spirit of adoption; 3,—may daily be renewed by his Holy Spirit, or become inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

During this baptismal season, on this day and on the first and second Sundays after Christmas, these several subjects may be appropriately considered in their order, in connection throughout with this mysterious union of God and man. It is therefore presumed, on this day, that we are made "the sons of God," by baptism, and praise him for this regeneration, or admission to the privilege of membership of Christ's Church, which is the body of Christ. On the next Sunday, we are called on, by the services and lessons, especially to meditate upon the other portion of the Collect; that we may be daily renewed by his Holy Spirit, the spirit of sonship or adoption, in our hearts; and, for the second day after Christmas, upon the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17.

In this Collect, we profess our belief in the mysterious union of the *divine* and *human* natures in Jesus Christ, that he was in the world, both God and man. As the Son of God, he was equal with the Father, "very God of very God." "I and my Father are one," John x. 30. As the Son of man, of the substance of his mother, he was inferior to the Father, to perform whose will "he was made flesh and dwelt among us," in his human nature: he therefore declared, "My Father is greater than I," John xiv. 28. He fulfilled all that the prophets had written concerning him, both in his divine and his human nature, that he might so far be capable of fulfilling all the conditions, on which alone the remission of our

sins could be granted; and underwent pain, sorrow, and death.

Thus we find, that Jesus Christ became, as man, capable of enduring every species of suffering. As God he could not sin; he was therefore the very being whom our offended Father was willing to accept as the appointed sacrifice. The Lamb of God was spotless; the sacrifice perfect. The Son of God was himself Perfection. The divine Son of God, having by himself purged our sins, "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," Heb. i. 3; the union of the divine with the human nature, gave to the sacrifice its infinite, all-sufficient value.

THE EPISTLE.—Heb. i.

In this Epistle is shown, the great superiority of the Christian Revelation over the Jewish. God, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake to the fathers, by miracles and signs, by visions and dreams, by the cloud or the fire, by oracle or angel. (*a*)

This portion is selected purposely to confirm the doctrine of the union of divine and human nature, and to guard us against any misunderstanding, as to the nature and character of the Messiah. It teaches, that he, who was the Son of man, was also the great God, whose dignity was never lowered, whose glory was never clouded, whose majesty was never sullied. "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever," Heb. i. 8:—he took our nature upon him, and became man, when he had by himself purged our sins, *v.* 3;

(*a*) See the successive prophecies mentioned in the Introduction to Advent.

that is, by the inherent merits of his death and blood-shedding; by their infinite intrinsic value. As they were the sufferings of *himself*, he offered them an atonement for sin; and the glory of his person, and the perfection of his nature, gave to his sufferings such merit, as was a sufficient reparation of honor to God, who had suffered an infinite injury and insult, by the sins of men.

Having assumed our nature, and suffered in it on earth, he has taken it up with him to heaven; and there it has the high honor, to be next to God the Father, and *lives and reigns with him.* This was the reward of his humiliation; and having a more excellent name than the angels, "whose years shall not fail," he there lives to care for us as his brethren, sons by adoption and grace. While we live, and when we have departed hence (a reflection which should quicken our interest in him), he is also our Saviour; that, to our duties of wonder and adoration, we may add the affections of love and union, as he himself has become profitable to us. As he is *God*, his name is in heaven, and he fills all things with his immensity. As he is *man*, he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. As *God*, he is the eternal Word of the Father, eternal, sustaining himself, and all-sufficient; and yet he submitted himself to a condition imperfect, inglorious, and necessitous. Isa. liii. 3. This condition should produce in us affections of love, duty, and obedience; and also desires of union and conformity to his sacred person, life, actions, and laws.

THE GOSPEL.—St. John i. 1.

The Gospel informs us of the existence of "the Word," the Son of God at the creation; and teaches us, that all things were made by him, and that this *Word* was made flesh and *dwelt among us.* Here is a great mystery; for we also, by this his birth, are to be *born again*, (regenerated,) from above, into a new and everlasting life, and to be made partakers of his Godhead. And in order that we might become *children by adoption and grace*, the Gospel speaks of John the Baptist, sent from God to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe.

Without such preparation, the passage from the Law to the Gospel would have been too abrupt. It was thus to effect a transition from a state of sensuality and corruption to one of spiritual purity; and was intended, to rouse a gross and carnal generation to a sense of sin, by the example of one whose life was a course of warfare against evil and inordinate affections.

The name *Jesus* did not belong to the Son of man, until his circumcision on the eighth day after his birth; and the title Christ belonged only to his office of Messiah, which was not exercised until thirty years after. But the *Word* belonged to him, long before his incarnation. The Evangelist, therefore, saying that the Word was made flesh, has done what is sufficient to prevent error and heresy. The Redeemer is called *the Word*, (*a*) because the offices which belong to him are those of

(*a*) The *Word of the Lord*, according to the interpretation of the Rabbins and Jewish commentators, is a phrase applied to the Messiah.

commanding the execution of the Father's will, and of making known his designs to created beings. His office has always been, in a certain sense, mediatorial. When, therefore, we consider wisdom as dwelling in the Supreme Mind, we look to the everlasting Father. When she speaks to the world, and declares the divine will to the children of men, we then hear the voice of *the Son*, the everlasting and incarnate *Word*. When we perceive the same wisdom striving against the corruptions of mankind, and laboring to restore the lost image of God, we acknowledge the influence and virtue of the eternal and sanctifying Spirit.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISAIAH IX. *to v.* 8.

Here is an illustrious prophecy of the birth and kingdom of Christ. After referring to the closing words of the last chapter, which described a state of "trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish," *v.* 22, the prophet says, now, the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, *v.* 2; for unto us a child (or son) is born, *v.* 6. No Christian should doubt, as to the import of these words. They refer to Christ; and the titles which are here given to him, cannot, with any propriety, be applied to any other person. The Prophet speaks of his birth, in a prophetic manner, as a thing accomplished; the child is *born*, because the Church, before his *incarnation*, reaped great benefit and advantage by his undertaking, in virtue of that great promise concerning the seed of the woman, Gen. iii. 15.

The titles are significant. . He is called "*Wonderful*," being both God and Man;—"*Counsellor*," from his knowledge of the counsels of God from eternity, Eph. iii. 10; Matt. xi. 27; "*The Mighty God*," as possessed of wisdom and strength to perform his greatest purposes, Is. x. 21; Rev. i. 8; "*The Everlasting Father*," that is, the Father of eternity, or, in the phraseology of the East, *the Eternal One*,—the Father of the great work of Redemption, Heb. v. 9; and, as a king preserving and commanding peace in his kingdom, "The Prince of Peace," who keeps the hearts of his people by this peace, which is one of the fruits of his blessed Spirit, Gal. v. 22, and rules in their hearts, Isa. ii. 4; xi. 6; Mic. v. 5; Heb. vii. 2. "*And* the government shall be upon his shoulder," *v.* 6; the whole weight, management, and burden of it being committed to him, Col. i. 18; Matt. xxviii. 18; Dan. vii. 14. There shall be no end of the increase of its peace; and so we ascribe to him this power in the Collect, "who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end."

The happiness of his subjects shall last to eternity, and perhaps be progressive. He shall reign from henceforth, through all generations of time; and when the kingdom shall be delivered up to God even the Father, the glory both of the Redeemer and the redeemed shall continue eternally, Christ "having obtained *eternal* redemption for us," Heb. ix. 12.

Second Lesson, LUKE II. *to v.* 15.

This chapter gives a statement of the circumstances attending the birth and infancy of our Lord Jesus Christ; and we here have the fulfilment of the prophecy contained in the first Evening Lesson for the day, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," as, in the Collect, "at this time to be born of a pure virgin." This Lesson informs us, that "she brought forth her first born son," *v.* 7, who became at once subject to the same treatment as other children. Here, too, is described the announcement, by the angel of the Lord to the shepherds, of the birth of a Saviour: "unto you is born this day," *v.* 11; as foretold by the Prophet, "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," Isa. ix. 6.

It may be noted that as Abraham and David, to whom the promise of the Messiah was first made, were shepherds, so was the completion of this promise, revealed by an angel of the Lord to shepherds, whilst they watched their flocks by night. The heavenly host sang together at the first creation, Job xxxviii. 7: and, in like manner, do they now, at the redemption of the world, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

It is not only in a spiritual, but in a temporal, sense, that he brought peace upon earth; for it is a matter of history that our Redeemer came into the world, in a time of profound and almost universal peace; and so the love of peace attended him to the last. The sword drawn in his defence, he ordered to be sheathed, John xviii. 11; and he healed the wound which it inflicted Luke xxii. 51. He could have prayed for, and have had for his relief, twelve legions of angels, Matt. xxvi. 53. He sa-

luted every house he entered, with peace, Luke x. 5. He bid the penitent go in peace, and sin no more, Luke vii. 50; viii. 48; John viii. 11. And he was ever exhorting his disciples to be at peace with one another, to love their enemies, to bless those that cursed them, to do good to those that hated them, and to pray for those that despitefully used and persecuted them, Matt. v. 44. Thus, Christ brought peace on earth; and he made our peace with God, by taking upon him the sins of the whole world.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISAIAH VII. 10–17.

The confederated forces of Syria and Israel having designed the siege of Jerusalem, on the second or third year of Ahaz, king of Judah, the prophet Isaiah, is commanded to go forth to meet Ahaz, and relieve him of his fear, by giving him the assurance, that Jerusalem should be preserved. When the Lord, in condescension, bid him ask a sign to confirm this promise,-and he refused this gracious offer, then the Prophet, in God's name, gives the sign; a sign of his good will and pleasure to Israel and to the house of David, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son," *v.* 14. And this prophecy is strictly applicable to Christ. "Butter and honey shall he eat," that is, shall take upon himself the infirmities of childhood, in being fed with the common nourishment given to the children of that country,—milk and honey, Heb. ii. 17.

To be born of a virgin, signified the divine power and

purity with which he should be brought into the world. He was not to be stained with the common pollutions of human nature, nor be born a man at once, but was literally so to take our nature upon him, that, like other children, he would advance gradually, through the several stages of infancy, childhood, and youth, to that of manhood; and, growing in wisdom and stature, grow strong in spirit, and come to maturity. Thus he should know, how "to refuse the evil and choose the good," Isa. vii. 15; and thus he would be qualified to sit upon the throne of David. This was not accomplished until five hundred years after; and, although Israel sought the ruin of that kingdom, they could not prevail, for the sceptre could never depart from Judah until Shiloh came, Gen. xlix. 10. A further sign of God's favor was, "they shall call his name Immanuel, God with us."(*a*) God, in our own nature, and at peace with us and in covenant with us! This was fulfilled in the name they gave him, JESUS, the Saviour, Matt. i. 21–25.

Second Lesson, TITUS III. 4–9.

The author of our salvation is here called, "God our Saviour." God the Father is a Saviour, by Christ, through the Spirit, John iii. 16. He "so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He is the Father of Christ, and, through him, the Father of mercies; all spiritual blessings are by Christ from him, Eph. i. 3.

After we have received information, in the previous

(*a*) Immanu (with us)-el (God).

services of this day, as to the being, the prophecies, and promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the circumstances of his birth, we are instructed in this lesson, as to the ground and motive of God's kindness, love, and pity toward man, "not by works of righteousness which we have done," *v.* 5; for "we are justified by his grace," *v.* 7.

The Jews were the peculiar people of God, having a partition-wall to separate them from other nations; for to them only appertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises," Rom. ix. 3, 4; Deut. xiv. 1, 2. But that inclosure is now taken down, by the accession of the Gentiles; "for Christ is our *peace*, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us," Eph. ii. 14.

God has now enlarged his family, by receiving the Gentiles into it, and by admitting them to the privilege of *sons*, "to as many as the Lord our God should call," Acts ii. 39; so that now, no baptized Christian is to be excluded from the public assemblings and instructions of the Church, if he is willing to be instructed, nor to be debarred of the holy sacraments, if he does not disqualify himself for receiving them. By means of the sacraments, the prayers, the instructions, and various provisions made by the Church, administered by persons set apart for that purpose, the grace of God is sufficient for us; and we can do all things required and expected from us, "through Christ which strengtheneth us," Phil. iv. 13.

CATECHISM.

"Wherein I was made a member of Christ."

These words comprehend the benefits and privileges conveyed by and conferred in our baptism; and they lead to the consideration of baptism, as a covenant made between God and man, having promises and conditions annexed to it. The mercies and blessings promised on God's part, are those above recited, "Wherein I was made the child of God."

The duties and conditions to be performed on man's part, are repeated by the baptized person, when he engages to "renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh." On this day, we consider our *membership of Christ's body*, or our regeneration; by which we are to understand the Christian Church, frequently styled in Scripture the *body of Christ*, Rom. xii. 4, 5; sometimes Christ himself, 1 Cor. xii. 27. This membership is obtained by faith in Christ; by our making, in baptism, a profession of it; and by our receiving the outward sign of it, Rom. vi. 13.

The Christian Church is a spiritual society composed of all Christian people, called out of the world, and united unto Christ as the head, Eph. i. 22, 23; Col. i. 18; and to one another as the members, by one communion. See Gal. iii. 26, 27. To be a member of this body, is to be admitted into the Society of Christians; and to enjoy its benefits and privileges, we must receive the sacrament of baptism. As many as have been thus "baptized unto Christ have put on Christ;" that is, by

baptism we are admitted into the Christian Church. For this reason Baptism is sometimes styled, *the door that opens into the Christian Church;* sometimes, *the gate that leads us into the Christ's fold;* and more frequently, the beginning of a new and Christian life; and *the first step to fellowship with God and his saints.*

The favors and privileges that appertain to us as members of Christ's Church, are: 1,—The liberty of God's holy Word and sacraments, with other means of grace in order to a holy life. 2,—The divine aids and assistances of grace, and the Holy Spirit, in order to render them useful and effectual to our salvation.

ARTICLE XXVII.

Baptism (*a*) is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but is also a sign of *Regeneration* (*b*) or New-birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church.

Among the sacred writers, Baptism denotes any washing, whether it be by dipping, sprinkling, or pouring. In which soever of these methods it is administered, it significantly points out to us the grace which is conferred by this sacrament; for, as the impurity of the body is

(*a*) The Greek words Βαπτίζω and Βαπτισμός, from whence the English word *Baptism* is derived, denote, among the sacred writers, any washing, whether it be by dipping or sprinkling. See Mark vii. 4; Luke xi. 38.

(*b*) As many as are persuaded and believe, that those things which are taught and declared by us are true, and undertake to lead lives agreeably thereto, are brought by us to a place where there is water, and are regenerated, after the same manner of regeneration in which we ourselves were regenerated.—*Justin Martyr*, Apol. 1. cap. 79.

washed away with water, so the pollution of the soul is removed by remission of sins; and as, in *dipping*, it is intimated, that we are buried with Christ, and with him rise again, so, in *sprinkling*, it is signified, that we are dead and born again.

They who receive Baptism rightly, that is, from persons duly authorized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, together with a serious profession of faith and repentance, are thereby *grafted into the Church*, "for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body," 1 Cor. xii. 13. To such persons the promise of forgiveness is visibly signed and sealed. The *promise* of our *adoption* as sons of God by the Holy Ghost, is likewise signed and sealed to them, Gal. iii. 26, 27. And by Baptism faith is confirmed, and grace increased, by virtue of prayer unto God. What ardent zeal and constancy did the new converts exhibit, after they had been baptized, "continuing steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers," Acts ii. 41, 42.

Baptism is, therefore, a federal admission into Christianity; it is the seal of a contract, in which all the privileges and blessings of the Gospel are, on God's part, conditionally promised to the persons baptized. And they, on their part, engage, by a solemn profession and vow, to maintain the doctrines and observe the precepts of the Christian religion. See 2 Cor. v. 17; John iii. 3, 5; Titus iii. 5; Col. ii. 12; Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5.

ARTICLE II.

The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man.

The doctrine here taught is plain in the Scriptures, that though the human nature in Christ acted according to its proper character, and had a peculiar will; yet there was such a constant presence indwelling, and acting upon it by the Eternal Word, as constituted both human and divine nature "one person." As these are thus so entirely united, so they are never to be separated.

ARTICLE XV.

Christ in the truth of our nature was made like unto us in all things, sin only except, from which he was clearly void, both in his *flesh* and in his *spirit*.

When Christ became the Son of God, he did not lay aside his divinity, to assume the nature of man; but he assumed the human nature into the divine, not as it was corrupted by sin, but as it was at first created by God. As it was corrupted by sin, it was corrupted with the worst of evils, and therefore was unworthy of, and incapable of, being united to God; and so, he that was perfect God as well as man, was a perfect man also as well as perfect God. Heb. vii. 26, 27; 1 John iii. 5; 1 Pet. ii. 22; Isa. liii. 9; John viii. 46.

REFLECTIONS.

We should be filled with wonder, love, and adoration, at—1. The surprising and new instance which God has given of his almighty power, in the incarnation of his blessed Son; an event so different from all other demonstrations of omnipotence exhibited to the world, Phil. ii. 8; Mic. v. 2.—2. The wisdom in this great mystery; a depth which, St. Peter tells us, "the angels desire to look into," 1 Pet. i. 12.—3. The justice of God so conspicuous on this occasion; justice to his honor and truth, who, after having denounced misery and death as the deserved wages of sin, had thereby concluded all mankind under the fatal sentence, because all had sinned.—4. His goodness and mercy, of which the every event, and each design and act of Providence, are so many fresh instances, yet all combined are not to be compared to this.

Faith, love to God, universal charity, and unaffected humility, are the pious dispositions suited to this occasion. Such are the graces, such the ornaments with which every soul should be decked on this festival of peace and love. We should remember, that he was made the Son of man, to make us sons of God by adoption and grace; and that, to stand in that relation to him, we are to strive to be holy as our heavenly Father is holy, and to live according to the light, and follow the example of this "Word made flesh."

Let us, then, *go into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.* With hymns of praise the angels announced his birth. It would be most ungrateful, that men should be silent, on the occasion of an un-

bounded blessing to themselves, for which the angels sing hymns of joy and praise. We may also share in the temporal comforts of the body; in cheerful Christian social converse; but let us not fall into the sins of luxury or vice. Above all, let us not dishonor that body, in which, as on this day, the God of all purity and holiness deigned to appear for our salvation. And as this day was to Jesus the beginning of a new life in our flesh, let it be, to each one of us, the confirmation of our new life in him.

He was made the Son of man, that we might be made *sons of God.* Let us fervently seek, from the God of all grace, the blessing for which the Church teaches us especially to pray, in the Collect appointed for this day's service.

BAPTISM.

Oh, if there be a sight on earth,
  That makes good angels smile,
'Tis when a soul of mortal birth
  Is wash'd from mortal guile;

When some repentant child of Eve
  In age is born anew;
Or when, on life's first buds and leaves
  Falls the baptismal dew.

But all the same! the soul that in
  That laver undefiled
Is truly wash'd from wrath and sin,
  Must be a little child.

The cross is signed; mysterious seal
  Of death, our life that won:
And Christ's dear spouse, for woe or weal
  Hath borne her Lord a son.

For woe or weal! the grateful shoot,
  Alas! may fade and die;
Though long the fatness of the root
  This shower of grace supply!

But Jesu! take thy child from earth,
  Ere sense and guile begin;
If only so this second birth
  May 'scape the death of sin.

The Sunday after Christmas-Day.

The primitive Christians were accustomed to observe the octave, or eighth day, after their principal feasts, with great solemnity; because the subjects of their chief feasts were of so high a nature, and so nearly concerned our salvation, that one day would not be sufficient to meditate upon them, and praise God as we should. Temporal deliverances may justly require one day of thanksgiving and joy; but the deliverance of the soul, by the blessings commemorated on those festivals, deserved a longer period of praise and acknowledgment.

THE COLLECT.

The same as Christmas-day.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

Spiritual Adoption: Renovation,

THE COLLECT.

The doctrine of the union in Jesus Christ of the divine and the human nature, contained in the first part of the Collect, has been explained.(*a*) In the second part of it, supplication is made to God, that the benefit of our Saviour's Advent may be continued to us; that we being regenerate, and made his children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by his Holy Spirit.

The prayer is carefully expressed, in order that no misunderstanding may arise, respecting the doctrine upon which it is framed. The supplicant speaks of himself as *regenerate;* at the same time, he asks to be daily renewed by the Holy Spirit. He *was* regenerate at Baptism, for he was then born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, as a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, according to the holy ordinance of Jesus Christ himself.(*b*) Yet he admits, that even this regeneration cannot ensure him his heavenly inheritance, unless sanctification, then first promised, be daily renewed in him by the Holy Spirit, which is answerable to the second head of the baptismal vow, "to believe all the articles of the Christian faith."

On this day, therefore, we meditate on the daily renewal of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of sonship or adoption abiding in our hearts, still commemorating the sacrament of Baptism and the new birth. The effect, then, of Baptism upon us as spiritual beings is, that old things are passed away, all things are become new, "for if any man be in Christ he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v.

(*a*) Collect for Christmas-day.
(*b*) Matt. xxviii. 19.

17. The Apostle Paul thus expressed himself, to point out to us, that when we are baptized into Jesus Christ we share, what are new to us, the privileges of the family into which we have newly entered; for we are privileged to look up to God as our Heavenly Father, who will hear our prayers, and take us under his protection.(*a*) With new privileges are connected new obligations; being members of the family of God, we are bound to live agreeably to the laws of God.

THE EPISTLE.—GAL. IV. 1.

The subject of our Lord's Nativity is still continued by the Church; but it is considered, on this day, in connection with our new birth, and is to be spiritually understood. In this Epistle, St. Paul illustrates the different states designed for the Jews, before and after the coming of our Saviour, by the example of an heir, before and after he is of age.

The similitude of an heir, is taken from the Roman law; by which it was ordained, that a pupil, notwithstanding he was lord of all his father's inheritance, should be kept under tutors and governors, until he arrived at full age: (*b*) under tutors, until fourteen years, and under curators, until five and twenty years. During his minority, he differed nothing from a servant; nothing, in respect of any possession or government of his own estate, having a right in law though not in deed. So the Jews were in bondage *under the elements*

(*a*) Whereby we cry, *Abba, Father*. Gal. iv. 6.

(*b*) Tutores dantur impuberibus; curatores, puberibus.—*Justinian*, Inst. tit. xx. xxiii.

of the world, being obligated to burthensome rites and observances, by which they were taught, and by which they were kept in a state of subjection, as a child under tutors and governors. "When the fulness of time was come," *v.* 4, the love of Christ, which is the Christian's law, did away with all sense of servitude, and rendered his service that of perfect freedom through "the spirit of adoption." As our Lord himself says, "henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth," John xv. 15.

We have thus become naturalized by spiritual regeneration, and adopted through election and grace. The Apostle terms us *co-heirs* with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. And Christ, who came in the flesh once, now comes in the Spirit, daily crying, *Abba*, *Father*, *v.* 6; and is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever, Heb. xiii. 8. All, therefore, who have the privilege of adoption, have the spirit of adoption, and partake of the nature of the children of God; and having the nature of sons, they are entitled to the *inheritance of sons.*

THE GOSPEL.—St. Matt. i. 18–25.

As in the Epistle St. Paul speaks of us as sons by adoption, that is, in distinction from Christ, who is the Son of God by nature; because in and through him only we are made sons, and because God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts; therefore the Gospel for the day proceeds to set forth Christ, as the true and natural Son of God. For this reason, it does not speak of Christ *after* his birth, (as in the regular course after the Nativity might be expected,) but *be-*

fore. "The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise," *v.* 18. This is the foundation of all our hopes; the miraculous generation of the second Adam. And then, as it is a matter of fact on which all this doctrine of salvation is founded, occurs the narrative of some circumstances attending it.

Here, therefore, is the great mystery which we cannot fathom, expressed by these two names, Jesus, or the Saviour; and Emmanuel, or God with us. The one speaks of the Son of man; the other, of the Son of God; the one, of saving us from sins; the other, of our being forever inconceivably united with God. The doctrine that we are made sons of God, and receive the spirit of adoption, is set forth, in a very impressive manner, in the Epistle. These high and heavenly truths are repeated, in many forms, to engage our attention; for we are almost lost to a sense of privileges so great.

The living reality of all this is more apparent, when considered in connexion with the short narrative in the Gospel. In the Epistle, we ourselves are spoken of as sons of God by adoption; and we might ask why, and how can these things be to us the great mystery? God himself come to be forever one with us appears in this Gospel, bringing home to us, as the great object of our faith, the Word made flesh, come to tabernacle among us. But the *sanctifying* as well as *life-giving* influence ascribed to the Holy Ghost, is here to be remembered. The angel emphatically said, "*that holy thing which shall be born of thee.*" The stain of our fallen parents adhered to every natural descendant of theirs. Hence an absolute necessity, that the Saviour should be conceived and born under circumstances deviating from the ordinary

course of nature. He has effectually provided against all these difficulties; he is altogether untainted with sin, "the Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot," 1 Pet. i. 19.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, Isa. xxxv.

What is here described, may be applied to the flourishing state of the Church, or the golden age of the Gospel, to commence at our Saviour's appearing, and to be more fully completed, when "he hath put all enemies under his feet," 1 Cor. xv. 24. Spiritual blessings here, as in other parts of Scripture, are often set forth under the emblems of fruitfulness and plenty, ch. iv. 2; xxx. 23; xxxii. 15; xli. 19; lv. 12; lxv. 10.

Our Saviour proved to John the Baptist's disciples, that he was the Messiah, by appealing to this prophecy, as literally fulfilled in the miracles which he wrought, Matt. xi. 2–5. This denotes, that they relate to Gospel times. And yet this does not prevent a larger construction of these words, which is, that God will remove all blindness and prejudice that prevented men from acknowledging the truth, xlii. 7; xxxii. 3; Acts xxvi. 18.—The gospel promises have different degrees and seasons of completion. Here, the Church and its members are to renew their strength, "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart," and "in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert," *v.* 6; by which we understand, (in apposition with the subject of the day,) the Spirit shall be poured out from on high; the waters,

and streams, or rivers of living water, of which our Saviour speaks, as the fulfilling of the Scripture, and most probably of this, ch. xxxii. 15. And here in the wilderness, *v.* 6, where it would least be expected that waters should break out.

"The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it:"—that course of religious duties, in which we should walk with an eye to the glory of God and our own felicity in the enjoyment of him; the way in which God will bring his chosen to himself. But the "unclean shall not pass over it," either to defile it or to disturb those who walk in it.

The ransomed of the Lord coming to Zion "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads," xxxv. 10, may be an allusion to the expression of joy used by the Jews when they went up to their solemn festivals, and to the crowns which were placed on the brows of newly married persons, Cant. iii. 11. It may be applied also to Christ's marriage with the Church, Rev. xix; xxi, 2; Isa. lxi. 10. "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away," *v.* 2, 10.

Second Lesson, St. Luke ii. 25.

In this Lesson we have the testimony of Simeon, and of Anna, to our Saviour. Of Simeon it is said, that he was "just and devout," waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him, *v.* 25. The "consolation" for which they had waited, with so great desire and patience, was a familiar phrase, used in reference to the coming of the Messiah.

The Holy Ghost was upon Simeon, as a spirit of

prophecy; for it was revealed to him, that he should not see death, until he had seen the Messiah, *v.* 26. And now he had the privilege of taking him in his arms and to his bosom, with a lively faith, with love and resignation; and also to speak of him as a light to lighten the Gentiles, strangers to the covenant, who were to be engrafted into the stock of Israel by adoption. "Now," he exclaimed, "lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." This answers to *the spirit of adoption*, whereby, as in the Epistle, we cry "*Abba, Father.*" It was Simeon's expectation of happiness hereafter, which not only divests death of its terrors, but makes it gain, Phil. i. 21.

And so with Anna, who, though of great age, had not departed from the temple, "but served God with fastings and prayers night and day," *v.* 37. Coming in at that instant she joined in this holy fervor of devotion; she made also *her* profession of faith in this *consolation* of Israel, and spake of him to all of them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem, from whence these joyful tidings were to be promulgated, Isa. ii. 3.

In this lesson we have likewise the growth of our Lord, and his advancement in spirit and wisdom, *v.* 40; "waxing strong in spirit," not in his own person, but in the person of the Church, or *in the demonstration of the Spirit*, as Origen has expressed it. This advancement, in the perfections of his mind, or by the teachings of the Spirit, are spoken of Christ, say the fathers, as indications of his humanity, and are to be understood "according to his human soul;" and though the *Word* was united to the human soul from his birth, yet might the divinity of the Holy Ghost manifest itself to the human nature,

and by degrees insinuate his gifts and illuminations as here taught by St. Luke.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISA. XL.

The prophet plainly foretold the Babylonish captivity, in the previous chapter; and here he revives the Jews with the comfortable promise of their return. But the many predictions in the succeeding chapters of this prophecy, relating to the life and death, the character and offices of the Messiah, and the flourishing state of the Church under him, can never be supposed to receive their due accomplishment, unless we consider, that the prophet was carried on from his first subject to a farther view of the enlargement of the Church, under the Gospel, and to the bringing in of the Gentiles, in other words, their adoption.

The prophecies are so expressed in many places, that the literal sense of the text better agrees with the Gospel times than with those that were nearer to the prophet's view; as may particularly be observed in some passages of this chapter. Here is a commencement similar to that which begins the Gospels, *The voice of one crying in the wilderness*, *v.* 3; which may be applied to John the Baptist, whose business it was *to prepare the way of the Lord;* to prepare the minds of men for the reception and entertainment of the Gospel of Christ, by repentance, so that, the heart being subdued by divine grace, there might be a proper hearing and reception of that Gospel.

The allusion to perishable nature, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field," *v.* 6, shows the nature of our dependance upon the creature comforts of the world, "because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." On the other hand, the validity of God's promise is presented to us, in the contrast, "the word of our God shall stand forever," *v.* 8. That word shall be established and accomplished.

After a reproof for idolatry and unbelief, there is encouragement, even to the youth, who may presume themselves to be strong, yet are faint and weary in their services and conflicts. They are encouraged to expect a renewal of their strength, by trusting upon God's promises, for "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint," *v.* 31.

Second Lesson, 1 Cor. ii.

The true spirit of *adoption* is set forth in this lesson, wherein the Apostle explains to the Corinthians the wisdom by which he declared to them the testimony of God; for he determined, not to know any thing among them but "Jesus Christ, and him crucified," *v.* 2; "my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," *v.* 4, 5.

His preaching was not with ornaments of speech, with philosophical arguments, an entertainment of the fancy, or an exhibition of human skill, but simply the revela-

tion of the divine will, in accordance with prophecy, and as manifested in the great principles of faith; "the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom;" hidden before, not after the revelation of it. This mystery, says the Apostle, "God hath revealed unto us by his Spirit," *v.* 10. It is the mystery which was hid from ages and generations, but was now made manifest to the saints, Rom. xvi. 25, 26; Eph. i. 9; iii. 3, 4, 9, 10; Col. i. 26, 27; ii. 2; iv. 6.

These things he taught, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, *v.* 13; that is, according to the fathers, comparing the things which were written by the Spirit in the Old Testament, with what is now revealed to us by the same Spirit, and confirming our doctrines from them. The natural man, one who has not been illuminated by the Spirit of God, not sanctified, or who has not received the spirit of adoption, cannot know them, "because they are spiritually discerned," *v.* 14. But the sanctified, the spiritual man, may judge of all things, human and divine, the deductions of reason and the discoveries of revelation; yet he himself is judged of no man, or discerned by none, who has no higher principle by which to judge, than that of nature.

CATECHISM.

"Wherein I was made the child of God."

We are in Baptism made children of God, by spiritual regeneration. This St. John calls, being born again of water and the Holy Ghost. St. Peter says, being begotten again to a lively hope. By our natural generation we are born in sin, and are thereby the children of wrath; but, by Baptism, we are regenerated, or born again, and are thereby made the children of grace, 1 Cor. vi. 11. By this new birth, we are made children of God, and are taught and enabled to cry, as in the Epistle for the day, "Abba, Father," Gal. iv. 4, 6; Rom. viii. 14, 15. Compare with this the parable of the prodigal son.

By adoption is to be understood, the receiving or engrafting a stranger into another stock or family, allowing him all the favors and privileges of a naturally born child. In like manner, God admits us, who were strangers, into his family, and calls us to the adoption of sons. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," John i. 12. See Psalm lxxxix. 30; Rom. viii. 14; 2 Cor. vi. 10; Eph. v. 1; 1 John iii. 1; iv. 7. And this privilege was granted to us, not because of any merit or entreaty of ours, but merely of his own free grace and good-will, Eph. i. 5, 6. We are, then, the children of God, by our new birth; and a certain covenant relation connected with it, whereby he has promised to be to *us a God*, and we are to be *to him a people;* he will be to us a *Father*, and

we are to be to him *sons*, 2 Cor. vi. 18. The greatest privilege contained in this relation being the forgiveness and remission of our sins, this belongs to all within the covenant, as St. Paul tells us that such have redemption in Christ, "the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," Eph. i. 3, 4, 7. Thus we are taught, in the Nicene Creed, to believe in "one baptism for the remission of sins." See Psal. lxxxix. 30; John i. 12; Rom. viii. 14; Eph. v. 1; 1 John iii. 1; iv. 7.

ARTICLE XXVII.

The promise of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.

Our adoption in baptism is shown from the sacred Scriptures, Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ, for as many of you as have believed in Christ, *and, upon that faith*, have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ, and so are become the sons of God; for, "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," John i. 12. Conformably to this, Justin Martyr speaks of this washing light, by which it is intimated, that the minds of such as understand these things are enlightened. (*a*) They who *so understand*, are no longer, then, accounted *servants*, but *sons;* not kept under the restraints of the Jewish dispensation, but permitted to have freer access to God

(*a*) Apol., cap. 30.

than they had before. And this privilege they enjoy by means of faith.

The Jews addressed God, rather as servants than sons; and they accordingly worshipped him in a servile manner. If they had offended, they were to bring their sacrifice to the priest, who was to offer it for them, whilst they stood at a distance. But we have a new and living way, consecrated for us through the blood of Jesus Christ, by which we may enter freely into the Holy Place. See Heb. x. 19, 20. Hence the Apostle declares, that we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, Rom. viii. 15. Being, then, members of Christ, that is, incorporated into the Church, we are now accounted as *children* of God; and being also baptized into Christ, we are baptized into his death, that as he died and rose again, so we should die unto sin and walk in newness of life, Rom. vi. 3, 4. They now have the promise, (as expressed in the Article,) of the forgiveness of sins, which they had in Baptism, confirmed, and of adoption to be the sons of God, Acts ii. 26, 27; Gal. iii. 26, 27; iv. 6; 2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 13, 14; and Article xvii.

The latter part of this article, relating to Baptism in general, is composed of three members: 1,—Alluding to regeneration, which was considered on Christmas-day, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church. 2,—The promise of the forgiveness of sins, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed, which is the subject of our meditations on this first Sunday after Christmas. 3,—Faith is confirmed, and grace increased, by virtue of prayer unto God, which is apposite to the condition of one who has realized the

first two steps in his Christian course. This will be considered on a future Sunday, (the 2d after Christmas,) and, intermediately, the rite of Circumcision or seal of the Covenant, as in Baptism applied to infants.

REFLECTIONS.

It is said by St. John, Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the *sons of God*, 1 John iii. 1; receive the adoption of sons; and, from being the contemners of his law, and outcasts, become the subjects of his affection and care. This great privilege of being made the sons of God, should teach us to live worthy of and agreeable to this high and noble relation.

The first and great duty of a child is to love his parents, with a filial affection. "We have had fathers of our flesh," says the Apostle, and we loved them, and "gave them reverence." So should we love our heavenly Father, *with all our heart, and with all our soul.* We should honor him, as "a son honoreth his father, and a servant his master," Mal. i. 6. This relation should engage us to study and live to his honor, 1 Cor. x. 31. As we are to obey our parents, to attend to their counsel, and kindly receive their admonitions and corrections, so is this obedience in the highest degree due to our Father in heaven, "for his commandments are not grievous," 1 John v. 3; and his corrections are always for our good.

Above all, as children are accustomed to trust in their parents, and to rely upon their care, we should thus

rely upon our heavenly Father, casting our care upon him who careth for us, and relying upon his providence, without anxiety or distrust. This lesson our Saviour teaches, Matt. vi. 30, 33, where we are admonished, not to be solicitous about food and raiment, because he knows that we have need of these things. If we seek first his kingdom and the righteousness thereof, all these things, he says, shall be added unto us, *v.* 33. As we are the children of God we are to pray to him, therefore, for all we want, and praise him for all that we receive. So doing, we shall be heard and accepted of him.

Brightly the morn of our new Birth arose
From the Baptismal fount, in awful trance
Unveiling half her glorious countenance.
We turned to our own dreams wooing earth's woes,
And slumbered. Haply now ere evening's close
We wake, and o'er us see a pitying glance,
The heavenly moon gone by, day in advance,
And far away the towers of our repose.
We doubt the title soil'd by sinful stain,
And of our birth-right, ask some sign again.
Such is distrust, of sin the penalty!
Oh! rather when thy knees sink on the plain,
Rise and look back on that Egyptian sea,
And doubt no more the arm that set thee free.

The Circumcision of Christ.

My heart is deeply pained,
  That after all thy care,
O Saviour, I've remained
  So slow thy fruit to bear;
When musing I retrace
  My course through vanished years,
How wonderful thy grace,
  How vile my heart appears!

Yet spare me, Saviour, spare!
  And, since thou didst begin,
Oh! finish by thy care
  Thine own good work within!
Renew my heart each day;
  Thy strength and joy restore;
And let me from thy way
  Ne'er know declension more

INTRODUCTION.

THE circumcision of our blessed Lord took place, when he was eight days old; and the celebration of it, is to commemorate his active obedience in fulfilling all righteousness. This is one branch of the meritorious cause of our redemption; for by this means Christ abrogated the severe injunctions of the Mosaic law, and put us under the easier terms of the Gospel.

This festival is, therefore, eight days after Christmas. Its institution is more ancient that it is supposed to be by our ritualists, as appears from Gregory's Sacramentary. In the sixth century, a special and appropriate service was provided for it. The octave of Christmas fell on the same day, and was observed with extraordinary solemnity; but the day received its denomination, most generally, from the Circumcision. If the festival be considered merely as the commemoration of "the circumcision of our Lord," its institution, or at least its revival, commenced with our reformation; or, rather, at the publication of our English Liturgy. It was first observed, in January, 1549–1550.

The Circumcision of Christ.

THE COLLECT.

Almighty God, who madest thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the Law for man, Luke ii. 21; Gal. iv. 4; Matt. iii. 13, 14, 15; Heb. v. 8.

Grant us the true Circumcision of the Spirit, Jer. iv. 4; Rom. ii. 29; Col. ii. 10, 11.

That, our hearts and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, Col. iii. 5; 1 Pet. ii. 11; John xvii. 15, 16; Gal. vi. 14; Rom. ii. 29.

We may in all things obey thy blessed will; through the same, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Gal. v. 24, 25; 2 Tim. ii. 4; 1 John ii. 15; Rom. vi. 12, 13; 1 Pet. ii. 21.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

Mortification:—Circumcision of the Spirit.

Our Saviour was obedient to the whole law and will of God; "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me," John v. 30. Though, as man, sinless; and though, as God, omnipotent, he was nevertheless made obedient to the law, from the earliest to the latest period of his life. He complied with every religious ordinance, so that, by fulfilling the law, he might fulfil all righteousness. Accordingly, we find him submitting, in his earliest days, to the rite of Circumcision. "When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS," Luke xi. 21.

This occasion of Christ's fulfilment of the law, the

Church commemorates; and the prayer in this Collect suitably leads us to proper meditations upon it. Circumcision was instituted by God, when he called Abraham from a strange country, and appointed him head of the Church,—the father of the faithful. It was intended as a sign, that a covenant had been entered into between God and his chosen; and it was, by God's command, to be continued, in order that his people, reminded by the outward sign, might be continually impressed with a due sense of the inward grace thereby signified and conveyed.

That our blessed Saviour, who was spotless and needed no remedy for sin, should so perfectly obey his Father's will, as to undergo this outward act, must convince us who are born in sin, that we should be brought, in our infancy, to the Sacrament of Baptism, and early made to observe that ordinance. It is, to us, what circumcision was to the Jews; significant of inward devotion to God's service, on our part, and of covenant mercy and grace, on his. The Collect makes that truth very forcible, saying, that our blessed Saviour was thus "obedient" "for man," that is, for the sake of man, for our benefit, that by fulfilling the law he might complete our redemption, giving us an example for good, even in infancy.

The Collect instructs us to pray, that we may have "the true Circumcision of the Spirit," removing from our hearts evil thoughts and sinful inclinations, and implanting holy thoughts and good resolutions; the fruits of a soul which, being regenerated, is daily renewed by the Holy Spirit of grace. The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, Eph. v. 9. The prayer is founded upon the *Epistle*,

which declares, that Abraham received the sign of circumcision, as appointed of God. The mere act did not benefit him. It was a seal of the righteousness of faith.

THE EPISTLE.—Rom. iv. 8.

St. Paul's intention, in this part of his Epistle, is to confute those erroneous doctrines which urged the necessity of still adhering to the Jewish law, and of depending upon it for justification and eternal life; conditions, which operated to exclude the Gentiles from any right to, or participation in, those benefits. For that purpose he had proved, that Jews, as well as Gentiles, were all under sin; therefore, that their law and the works of it were not sufficient to save them; and that there should consequently be some other qualification, which he shows to be *faith.* This men might have, although they had been sinners. And he proves, that this was the condition of the happiness of their great ancestor.

Abraham himself, who was at one time an idolater, was esteemed righteous, in virtue of this, and not for the merit of his own doings, or the innocence of his life. The law, therefore, while necessary to the people of Israel, could only be so as an indispensable qualification for such, for obtaining mercy, not as putting men into a state which did not require pardon. St. Paul proceeds then to show, that the faith of Abraham having been counted for righteousness, *before* his circumcision, legal rites were not absolutely necessary, considering him as a private person. But when viewed as the common father of the faithful, every heir of the same promise *must* attain it by the same method; and, therefore,

faith which Abraham had, and not the works of the law which he had not, must be the condition of men's having *righteousness reckoned to them*, which implies the pardon of their sins and the salvation of their souls.

This is the substance of the Apostle's argument; the latter part of which, concerning Abraham, is most appropriately set before us this day, upon which we commemorate the gracious condescension of his promised seed, in whom "shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xxvi. 4, submitting to be circumcised, and teaching us a lesson of humility; so made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, Gal. iv. 5.

THE GOSPEL.—St. Luke ii. 15.

The narrative of the shepherds' visit to Bethlehem, is here given. And now was to be fulfilled that covenant which God had made with Abraham, almost two thousand years before, binding it to his seed by the outward sign of circumcision, the sign of faith in his promise, and setting forth in mystery the true circumcision of the Spirit.

"And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb." The eighth day; the day of Christ's resurrection; the first day of the New Creation, like the beginning of a new year to a Christian,—the new everlasting year, whereby, being "dead with Christ" he is "alive unto God," Rom. vi. 8, 11.

Upon this occasion of his circumcision, the name of

Jesus was given to him. It had been previously determined and signified, by divine appointment, that this should be his name. In the first salutation, the angel Gabriel told the blessed virgin, that she should "conceive" in her womb, and "bring forth a son," and "call his name JESUS." In the dream of Joseph, the angel of the Lord had informed him, not only of the name, but of its interpretation, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." The time of conferring the name was regulated by the practice, prevalent among the Jews, of giving a child his name at the time of his circumcision; a practice, derived, in the opinion of some writers, from the first institution of that ceremony, as it was certainly on that occasion that God altered the name of *Abram* to *Abraham*,(*a*) Gen. xvii. 5. Accordingly, our Lord then took upon him that name which declared him to be the Saviour of the world; which, as it was consummated in the blood of the cross, so was it inaugurated in the blood of the circumcision.

In the visit of the shepherds, who were persons in humble life, we have a lesson of humility. None should come to Christ, but those who are poor in spirit, and despisers of the world. And because it is the Circumcision, we pray in the Collect, that, as Christ was "circumcised and obedient to the Law for man," God would grant us "the true Circumcision of the Spirit;" that our hearts may be mortified from all worldly desires, that we may in all things obey the blessed will of God.

(*a*) *Abram*, a high father; *Abraham*, the father of a great multitude.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, GEN. XVII. *to v.* 15.

The covenant which was made between Jehovah, the Father of mercies, and Abraham, the father of the faithful, is here set forth. "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised," *v.* 10. The next verse explains it, by the sign or "token of the covenant," as the paschal lamb is called the Lord's passover, Exod. xii. 11, that is, the memorial of the angel's passing by them when he slew the Egyptian children, xiii. 9.

But circumcision was a sign whereby they entered into covenant with God, to be his people. It was not a mere mark, by which they should be known to be Abraham's seed, and distinguished from other nations; but they were made, by this, the children of the covenant, and entitled to the blessings of it. It is called a sign and seal, Rom. iv. 11, because it was a confirmation to Abraham and his seed of those promises which were God's part of the covenant, assuring them of its fulfilment. In due time they were to possess the land of Canaan.

The continuation of the ordinance after they had entered into Canaan, intimates, that the promise looked beyond it to another Canaan which they should still have in expectation, Heb. iv. 8. It also implied an obligation, on the part of Abraham and his seed, to the exercise of that duty which was their part of the covenant; not only to accept that covenant and consent to it, and to put away the corruption of the flesh, (its out-

ward signification,) but generally to observe all the commands of God as they should be made known to them. Circumcision made men "debtors to do the whole law," Gal. v. 3.

The circumstances of making this covenant, and the time and manner, are given in the remainder of the lesson. Its religious observance was required, under a severe penalty, *v.* 14. It was a bloody ordinance, for all things by the law were "purged with blood," Heb. ix. 22; Exod. xxiv. 8. But the blood of Christ being shed, all bloody ordinances are now abolished. For Circumcision, therefore, is substituted Baptism.

Second Lesson, Rom. ii.

The Apostle had, in the former chapter, laid down this as the foundation of his discourse, that "the Gospel of Christ" was "the power of God unto salvation," both to Jew and Gentile, i. *v.* 16; that there only was revealed that righteousness of God through faith, by which alone life and salvation were to be obtained. He had also shown the necessity of this faith, because "the wrath of God" was "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness," i. 18; that this the Gentiles had done, by acting against the light of nature; and that God had been angry with them and had punished them for it. He had shown this, from *v.* 19 to the end of the chapter.

These Gentiles were reputed by the Jews as unclean, great sinners, and so, incapable of salvation; and the

opposition of the Jews to the Gospel was, that it admitted such men to the favor of God, without *circumcision* and obedience to the law of Moses. To the Jews, therefore, the apostle, in this chapter, directs his discourse. He says, that they who lived under the law, required this justification, as much as others, being also great sinners. And in the following chapters, he teaches, that neither they nor the Gentiles could obtain the justification, by the *law*, *v.* 13, 17.

The whole scope of these two chapters may be gathered, from the iii. and ix. of this Epistle. In this chapter, he proves, that the Jews and Gentiles stand upon the same level before the justice of God, "for there is no respect of persons," *v.* 11; Acts x. 34; but in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him. Men are saved, therefore, not with respect to any external privileges, but according to their spiritual state and disposition. The Jew rested in the Law, and made his boast of God, and approved "the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law," *v.* 16, who had the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law, *v.* 20. He then questions them on the requirements of the law. "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" *v.* 21. And he proceeds to assert the insufficiency of any profession to absolve them from their sins. Having shown, that their sins must render them obnoxious to the divine wrath, he then proves, that the righteousness of the circumcised Gentile would render him acceptable to God, as well as the righteousness of the Jew.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, DEUT. x. *v.* 12.

After receiving an account of the rite of circumcision, and particularly its outward observance, in the first morning lesson, this chapter very pertinently describes the inward affections and disposition of our souls towards God, as the great object and result of circumcision. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" *v.* 12, 13.

We must adore him, love him, fear him, and walk in his ways. We must serve him, and keep his commandments, and perform other duties here commended to our attention; especially must we have the circumcision of the heart, *v.* 16, and not satisfy ourselves with the mere performance of this ordinance as an external ceremony, but cast away our evil affections, which would make us insensible of God's mercies and corrections, and would cause our disobedience to his commands.

We are to guard against all kinds of variance, and all hatred and wrath, as well as strife and contention, which cause men to be ill at ease with themselves and others; they are therefore properly accounted *lusts of the flesh.* A metaphoric allusion is made to the ox, that leans his neck and shoulders against the yoke. Be no more stiff-necked, Exod. xxxii. 4. St. Stephen characterizes the Jews, Acts vii. 51, as "stiff-necked and un-

circumcised in heart." To a contrary disposition God promises the blessings of life, Deut. xxx. 6.

Our duty to our neighbor, is enjoined in the command, "Love ye the stranger," *v.* 19. By this may be signified the Gentiles, so despised by the Jews, yet for whom also Christ died. Our duty to ourselves is also enjoined, in *v.* 16, by the mortification of the flesh with the lusts thereof, resting not in corporal circumcision, which was only the sign, but in that of the heart, which was the thing signified. And so the command of Christ requires of those who are regenerated, "to cut off the right hand," to pluck out the "right eye," that offends us, Matt. v. 30, and thus to have that spiritual renovation in the Baptismal covenant.

Second Lesson, COL. II.

In this chapter, St. Paul expresses his solicitude for the spiritual welfare of the Colossians, that their hearts might be comforted to the acknowledgment or understanding of the mystery of the Father and of Christ, or the dispensation of the divine grace of God, in offering salvation to the Gentiles by Christ, and conferring on them, equally with the Jews, the blessings of the Gospel. This is "the mystery, which from the beginning hath been hid in God," Eph. iii. 9.

They are reminded of their circumcision, "made without hands," *v.* 11, that is, the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. iii. 5, by baptism, substituted by our Lord in the room of the Jewish circumcision. This outward visible sign of our inward and spiritual grace, to be effectual to save us,

must be by the engagement of "*repentance whereby we forsake sin*, and faith, whereby we steadfastly believe the promises of God made to us in that Sacrament."

If these conditions are necessary, it may be inquired, "*Why, then, are infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them?*" Infants were of old admitted, by circumcision, under an express law given to Abraham, requiring every male child to be circumcised, on the eighth day, Gen. xvii. And the general practice of the Jews was according to it. By the rite of Baptism, children are entered into covenant with God under the Gospel, as the circumcised infant became a debtor to the whole law of Moses, our Saviour making no alteration as to the time or age of those who were to be received into this sacred society, but only changing the rite of circumcising into that of washing.

Infants may therefore very properly receive baptism, because God, on his part, can certainly express, by it, the removal of the disadvantages which they have under the sin of Adam; removing, hereafter, on proper conditions, the disadvantages which they may be subjected to by their own sins. Although they cannot, on their parts, expressly promise to perform these conditions, yet they are bound to perform them whether they promise or not. Their sureties, however, promise for them, that they shall be made sensible, in due time, of their obligations, and shall ratify the engagement, in their own persons. This they do, in the rite of *Confirmation.* It then becomes complete; for it is not necessary that a covenant should be executed, by both parties to it, *at the same time;* and as the Christian covenant is one of the greatest equity and favor, we cannot doubt, (to speak in the language of our Liturgy,) but that God "favorably

alloweth this charitable work" in bringing infants to his holy baptism. The promise of the covenant is expressly said to belong "to us and to our children," Acts ii. 39, without any limitation of age. Why, then, should they not *all*, since they are to partake of the promise, partake also of the sign, of it? especially since *the infants of Jews* were by a solemn sign entered into the covenant, and *the infants of proselytes* to the Jews, by this very sign, amongst others, of Baptism.

The Apostles baptized whole families at once, Acts xvi. 15, 33, doubtless children among the rest; of whom our Saviour says, "of such is the kingdom of God," Mark x. 14, and St. Paul says, "they are holy," 1 Cor. vii. 14, which they cannot be reputed, without *entering into the Gospel covenant.* This, therefore, is constantly represented, in the New Testament, as necessary to salvation.

CATECHISM.

Question. **What is required of persons to be Baptized?**

Answer. **Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and Faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament.**

Q. **Why then are Infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them?**

A. **Because they promise them both by their Sureties; which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform.**

During this season of Baptism, on the preceding Sundays, this Sacrament has been considered as a covenant of blessings and privileges promised, on God's part, and of duties and conditions to be performed on our part;—

outward signs and seals, ratified and confirmed to us, considered, on this day, as a substitute for circumcision. (*a*) By this is understood a true Circumcision of the Spirit, or the weaning of ourselves from the world, and the setting of our affections on God. So Baptism imports repentance and faith, Acts viii. 37; ii. 38.

As to the admission of infants, who can know nothing of the nature, the end, or the obligations of such conditions, the question, *why* they are baptized, manifestly implies, that they are rightfully admitted and ought to be so; for, although infants are not actually mentioned in the New Testament, as having been baptized, yet there are several passages of Scripture which may imply that they were so, even by the Apostles themselves, Acts xvi. 15, 33; 1 Cor. i. 16.

But why may infants promise the conditions of Baptism by their Sureties, who present and undertake for them? And why should this promise made by others, in their behalf, afterwards be performed by them? Because of the tender years of infants, and their inability to promise or perform conditions, guardians have been allowed by all nations to contract for them, in temporal affairs; and contracts made by guardians are good in law, so that infants are thus bound by deeds drawn up and sealed by others in their behalf, although they do not understand the import or effect of them. In like manner, the mercy of God and the Church have allowed infants to have sureties or spiritual guardians, to contract for them in spiritual matters, and to do that for their soul's good, which they cannot do for themselves.

(*a*) See Second Evening Lesson.

This is accordingly looked upon, and accepted by God as their act.

As to their after performance of those conditions *when they come to age*, as they receive the benefit of the promise made in their behalf, so does it become their duty to perform and fulfil the conditions. A minor cannot, when he comes to age, repudiate that which his guardian engaged for him at the time of his infancy. If he receive a lease or gift, upon certain terms agreed upon by others in his stead, he must perform the conditions or forfeit the title to it. Children are received into the covenant, by the promise of their sureties, and have grace conferred on them, upon conditions of faith and repentance. These they are bound to perform, or else they justly lose all the benefits and privileges of the ordinance; and if they fail, when they come to age, they may be said to break a vow and covenant if they sin against them. As therefore no incapacity debarred infants from the benefits of Circumcision, so neither may it exclude them now from the advantages of Baptism. The mercy of the Gospel is greater and wider than that of the Law; and the promises and conditions are the same in both.

ARTICLE IX.

"And this infection of our nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated." "And although there is no condemnation for those that believe and are baptized; yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin."

There is no reason to think, that baptism takes away all the branches and effects of original sin. It is enough

if we are by it delivered from the wrath of God, and brought into a state of favor and acceptance. We are freed from the cause of death, by our being entitled to a blessed resurrection; and if we are so far freed from the corruption of our nature, as to have a federal right to such assistance as will enable us to resist and repress it, though it is not quite extinct in us so long as we live in these frail and mortal bodies, here are very great effects of our admission to Christianity by baptism, Rom. viii. 1; Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 17, 18; v. 24; Rom. vii. 7, 8; Matt. v. 28; James i. 15; 1 John v. 17.

That this infection does remain, every man by sad experience knows. The consequence of it is, that the flesh is not subject to the law of God. The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, Rom. vii. 7, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23; Gal. v. 17; 1 John i. 8, 10; Eccl. vii. 20; Prov. xx. 9; Isa. lxiv. 6; James iii. 2.

ARTICLE XV.

"But all we the rest, although baptized, and born again in Christ, yet offend in many things; and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

Though Christ was free from sin, there is no one that ever did or ever shall live upon earth, not defiled with and not guilty of it. Nay, though we are baptized, and our original sin washed from us, and though born again, so that actual sin is subdued; nevertheless, sin will dwell in us, and we shall be guilty of sin, 1 John ii. 8, 10; James iii. 2; Gal. iii. 22; Rom. iii. 10; Gal. v. 17; Ps. xix. 12; 1 Kings viii. 46; Isa. lxiv. 6.

ARTICLE XVI.

"Not every deadly sin willingly committed after Baptism is sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore the grant of Repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after Baptism."

The words of the Apostle, which show, that it is impossible for those who fall away "to renew them again unto repentance," Heb. vi. 6, plainly import only those who, not only being baptized but having received a share of the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost, had totally renounced the Christian religion and apostatized from the faith, crucifying Christ anew. See Matt. xxvi. 35, 74, 75; Luke xxii. 61; Acts viii. 22.

ARTICLE XXVII.

The Baptism of young Children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.

It is evident, that, under the Law, not only proselytes, but children of Jewish parents, when eight days old, were to be circumcised, that is, to be initiated into the Church of God. The same command may be regarded as extending to baptism also; for it is by this that we are admitted into the Church now. Thus the neglect to baptize young children appears to be a transgression of the commands of God. The words of our Saviour are: "Go ye therefore, and teach *all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," Matt. xxviii. 19. The word *teach*, imports, in the original Greek, *to make disciples*, a disciple being

a scholar, which a child may be before learning any thing. (*a*)

The words *all nations* include men, women, and children, Mark x. 14. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven;" therefore, they must be disciples, unless such as are not disciples should be deemed to belong to the kingdom of God. Unless we are to regard the children of Christian parents as Christians, the children of believing parents, that is, outward professors of Faith, will be in a worse condition than they were under the law; for such children were acknowledged to be under the covenant, and therefore had always the seal of the covenant administered to them. And if the children of believing parents should be denied the same privilege, now under the gospel, the gospel must be narrower than the law itself; but as the Law and the Gospel contain the same covenant, and under the law children were accounted disciples, and therefore circumcised, as well as adults, it must be a consequence that children are in the same capacity now, as they were then; and as they were then admitted into the Church by circumcision, they should now be invested with the same privilege by Baptism.

REFLECTIONS.

The legal ceremony of circumcision, having received its accomplishment in Christ, became of course null. The doctrine is, therefore, to be transmitted from the

(*a*) Making them disciples, that is, entering them into Christ's school, or making them members of his Church, and thereby placing them in a position or capacity to be taught afterwards. We find the word διδάσκοντες, which signifies the actual teaching or instruction of disciples, in the commission, to follow baptizing, in the next verse: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

head to the heart, by the operation of the Eternal Spirit to do away what is styled by St. James "the superfluity of naughtiness," cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1. How can the circumcision of Christ profit any one, who celebrates the festival as often as it returns, himself still continuing "uncircumcised in heart and ears?" Acts vii. 51. In other words, how can his baptism save him, whose life is one perpetual renunciation of it?

Baptism, which succeeded in the place of circumcision, takes up the mystery where that left it. We are to labor, therefore, for the spirit of the two Sacraments in our hearts, that they may be manifested in our lives and conversation. Otherwise, the letter of them will only condemn us. This we are to do, by mortifying the flesh, by being dead to sin and raised again to righteousness. The blessed work of regeneration, sacramentally shown forth and begun in baptism, is to be continued through life by successive *renovations* of repentance; by daily accessions of knowledge, faith, and charity; and by carrying on a gradual growth in grace until it be perfected.

With respect to the appointed name JESUS, given to our Saviour, we may learn, that the imposition of a particular name on a person, at his admission into the Church of God, should afford to him, in after times, a constant memorial of the solemn engagements connected with that sacred name. We learn, too, from the example of our blessed Lord's circumcision, how strongly we should recommend the care of dedicating our children to our Lord and Master in holy baptism, at the first opportunity for doing so. Circumcision was as much a cove-

nant formerly, as baptism is now; and what God then expressly ordained for infants, he cannot be supposed to disapprove of now. Is he the God of the Infants of the Jews, and not of the Christians? Let us earnestly bring our little ones to him to be received as his, in the way he has ordained. This appointed instrument of grace may serve as a happy safeguard for the child, against the power of the enemy; and he who shed his first blood at eight days old, will know how to save them who began to be his from infancy.

MORTIFICATION; CIRCUMCISION OF THE SPIRIT.

The year begins with thee,
  And thou beginn'st with woe,
To let the world of sinners see,
  That blood for sin must flow.

Thine infant cries, O Lord,
  Thy tears upon the breast,
Are not enough; the legal sword
  Must do its stern behest.

Art thou a child of tears,
  Cradled in care and woe?
And seems it hard, thy vernal years
  Few vernal joys can show?

And fall the sounds of mirth
  Sad on thy lonely heart,
From all the hopes and charms of earth
  Untimely called to part?

Look here and hold thy peace;
  The giver of all good
Even from the womb takes no release
  From suffering, tears, and blood!

If thou would'st reap in love,
  First sow in holy fear;
So life a winter's morn may prove
  To a bright endless year.

The Second Sunday after Christmas.

THE COLLECT.

The same as on the Circumcision.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

Mortification; and obedience, in view of the Christian's Inheritance.

On the Nativity, the subject for the day was our incorporation into Christ's Church by Baptism, or Regeneration; on the Sunday after, the Spirit of Adoption, or Renovation of the Heart; on Circumcision-day, the mortification of our earthly members, as applied to the baptismal rite, now substituted for circumcision, and applicable to infants who are incapable themselves of entering into its conditions but by means of sureties claiming that privilege.

On this day, the same subject is continued; and sup-

posing the Gospel economy to be carried out in this progress of the heart by grace, we have in view the Christian's Inheritance, the great result of Christian obedience, which is the third branch of the catechetical answer, "*Wherein I was made a member of Christ,—the child of God, and,—an Inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.*" The three great benefits of the covenant corresponding with these are Regenerating grace,—Remission of sins, and—a Title to the kingdom of Heaven. In this is involved that obedience which we pray for in the Collect, "that we may in all things obey thy blessed will;" and which is the sum of all that is required to entitle us to the promise made to Abraham, "*obey* my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people," Jer. vii. 23,—apposite to the third branch of the baptismal vow, *To keep God's holy will and commandments and walk in the same all the days of my life.* As adopted children, therefore, of him who made his blessed Son to be circumcised and obedient to the law for man, *we* are obedient to the law of the Gospel, and are baptized thereunto, baptism being to us the seal of the righteousness of faith.

If we are bound obediently to observe the *form* of baptism, still stronger is our obligation to observe the *conditions* of it: because so only can we secure for ourselves the benefits to which that form admits us. Obedience is the only proof of love and duty towards God, and is therefore our only safety, John xiv. 15. On this day, as on each day after unto the Epiphany, (*a*) the Church encourages us to reflect, as well on the subject of our baptismal engagements, as now especially on that in-

(*a*) The Rubric requires, that the same Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, shall serve for every day after unto the Epiphany.

heritance as the consequence of all, "An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" for us, 1 Peter i. 4.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISA. XLI.

In the last chapter, encouragement was given to those who "wait upon the Lord," that they shall renew their strength, xl. *v.* 31. And now, in this chapter, Jehovah is introduced as pleading his own cause against the false gods of the heathen, and challenging the idols to show such instances of their power and goodness, in protecting their votaries, as might be alleged in his behalf with respect to his care and providence over the Jews.

Those instructions were intended to confirm the people in their religion, and to preserve them from being drawn aside to comply with the Babylonish idolatry; but they contain also a plain prediction of the calling of the Gentiles, and of their turning from idols to serve the living and true God. Those who defend idolatry are called on in like terms to "renew *their* strength," *v.* 1, and test *its* efficacy, with that which is promised to those *who wait upon the Lord.* Israel is addressed by the endearing expression of *God's chosen servant of the seed of Abraham*, one whom he had dignified with the title of *friend*, 2 Chron. xx. 7, a glorious privilege, which Christ was pleased to communicate to his disciples, John xv. 13. They are encouraged not to fear nor be dismayed; for when their tongue fails them for

thirst, God will open rivers in the high places, and fountains in the midst of valleys, *v.* 10 to 20.

And when the idolaters are called on to "show the things that are to come to pass hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods," *v.* 22, they are made to understand, in the remainder of the chapter, that God only can certainly foreknow future events, and the determination of man's free will; and that he will show his power, in the raising up of "one from the North," *v.* 25, *Cyrus*, who was the type of *Christ*, and who was to come, and did come upon the princes of Babylon, as Christ came, to maintain the honor of God, and to break the powers of Hell, that we might be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints," Col. i. 12; trusting in the help of God our Father, and not in the idols of our hearts; but, with hearts made subject to his holy will, to know the God whom we are to serve, whose commandment only we are to obey.

Second Lesson, MARK I. *to v.* 16.

In this lesson we have an account of the baptism of John, 4–8; and his self-denying spirit, exhibited in his mode of life, showed great mortification of the flesh, and a holy contempt of the world and non-conformity to it. This may truly be called the beginning of the Gospel of Christ in the soul.

We have here, too, the fulfilment of all righteousness by our Saviour in that baptism, when, as he went up from the water, (*a*) he saw "the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him," *v.* 10.

(*a*) *ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος*, from the water.

This signified a *communion with God*, which we may expect, upon attending on his ordinances, and *the descent* of his gifts, graces, and comforts, on the believing heart.

It is, however, the subject upon which our Saviour preached, which is here chiefly to be regarded; when, after John was put in prison, and his testimony was sealed, Jesus came into Galilee, "*preaching the kingdom of God*," to bring men into subjection, and to save them by it. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Gospel," *v.* 15. This is said to refer to the Old Testament, in which the kingdom of the Messiah was promised, and the time fixed for the introduction of it. Neither the prophecies nor the signs of the times were regarded. And now Christ gives notice of the great event. Discoveries of divine life, light, and love, are to be made; and a dispensation more heavenly and spiritual than that which has hitherto been expressed, is now to commence. Now, repentance and faith can alone ensure our becoming the subjects of that kingdom. Their conditions, which were then imposed for obtaining the great privilege, are still required. A conformity to these, will result in sincere obedience to God's commandments,—the highest exercise of faith and repentance; and will crown all our expectations of happiness.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISAIAH XLII.

The same prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah is here noticed, under the type of Cyrus, as in the last chapter,—the first morning lesson. The character of Christ is here given,—his meekness and gentleness; and his success in calling the Gentiles, 1–5; Matt. xi. 18.

Again the Lord's supremacy over idols is asserted, "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images," *v.* 8. Therefore, he will assert his honor by vindicating the cause of his Church and people, and will not suffer his truth to be extinguished, nor false gods and false ways of worship to usurp that glory which is due to himself alone. This was accomplished, in an extraordinary manner, by publishing the Gospel and sending the Messiah, which gave a fatal blow to heathen idolatry. The promises were fulfilled, "Behold the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them," *v.* 9. This proved the truth of his word; and the blessings of the New Testament are declared, *v.* 10, 12,—the establishment of Christ's kingdom.

But, while this is foretold for their encouragement and comfort, there were yet those who required conviction and humiliation; and who fitly represented the Jews that rejected Christ and forfeited the promised inheritance, *v.* 18. They are reproached for their blind-

ness and hardness of heart, under all the means of instruction which had been afforded them. To this evil temper and disobedience they were to ascribe all the judgments which God had already inflicted on them, and which should at last end in a total captivity, and have still more astonishing effects, in their disobedience and rejection of the Messiah, Isa. vi. 10, 11. Thus the wicked may expect the visitation of God's judgments, as the righteous are to look for the enjoyment of his promised blessings.

Second Lesson, HEB. II.

The Christian who has experienced the renovating influences of religion, and who considers himself entitled to the privileges of a child of God, is here admonished to make it his chief concern, to adhere to all the precepts and instructions of the Gospel, that is, "to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip," *v.* 1: that dispensation being more excellent than the law of the Old Testament, as the Apostle had shown in the last chapter.

The design of this Epistle was to show the excellency of the Gospel above the law, and thus to lessen the regard of the Hebrews for its ceremonies, for which they had so great reverence; and to induce them to adhere to Christian faith, and to continue in it. If by the word spoken by angels, transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? "We see Jesus" "made a little lower than the angels" by being made man, *v.* 9, that he might die for our sins. And

as a reward for such humiliation and suffering, he was raised again to glory and honor, and placed at the head of all creation: all things being "in subjection under his feet." The final accomplishment of this will close the mediatorial system, 1 Cor. xv. 26, 28. While, however, there remains any enemy unsubdued, his kingdom will be progressing in the world; for "he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet," 1 Cor. xv. 25.

The apostle shows how it became God, that Christ should suffer, "from whom are all things, and by whom are all things," *v.* 10; in bringing many sons unto glory. It was in the choice of the means, that is, in finding such a person to be the Captain of our salvation, who "took not on him the nature of angels," but the seed of Abraham, *v.* 16; whose object was, not to save the fallen angels, but sinful flesh and blood. He assumed the nature of man, that he might be like to his brethren, to make reconciliation for sins; and so, being tempted as we are, he should be able to succor them that are tempted, *v.* 17, 18. In all our self-mortification, he is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and is able to succor us when we are tempted; a conflict to which we shall ever be exposed, although adopted sons of God, and entitled to a heavenly inheritance.

CATECHISM.

"An inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

Having become members of Christ's body, or his Church, and being entitled to the enjoyment and privileges of it; and having been regenerated outwardly by

baptism, and, by the spirit of adoption, made children of God,—renovated, and entitled to the promises made to the faithful; and having the true Circumcision of the Spirit, our hearts and members being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, that we may in all things obey God's blessed will; we are now entitled to be *inheritors of the kingdom of heaven*, that is, heirs of eternal happiness to be enjoyed in heaven,—and this, by virtue of our union with Christ, Rom. viii. 16, 17; Heb. i. 2; Col. i. 12; iii. 24; 1 Pet. i. 3–5.

If we are perverse, rebellious, or disobedient children, we shall be disinherited, Is. xxx. 1; Matt. x. 22; Heb. iii. 6; 1 Cor. ix. 27. The effect of this spiritual discipline is to make us obey God's blessed revealed will, as the guide of our lives; an obedience, which is the last and great condition of the baptismal covenant,—*To love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength.* This gives us a title to that heavenly kingdom, which we are here and frequently elsewhere told in Scripture is ours by inheritance.

Of all tenures, that of Inheritance is accounted the best; because it is unlimited and perpetual. That which is held by Lease, expires in a given time. That which is held for life dies likewise, and falls away; but that which is held by Inheritance, or in fee, is our own forever. Now this is the tenure by which we hold our heavenly inheritance,—forever. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, *inherit* the kingdom prepared for you." To this inheritance we have no *natural right*, because we were born in sin. It is derived to us, only and entirely, through the mercy and merits of Jesus Christ. By baptism, we are heirs, Gal. iv. 7; "not by works of

righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. iii. 5, 6. By this means we have a firm and indefeasible title to the kingdom of heaven, as heirs through Christ: I. By his purchase, he gave himself a ransom for all, 1 Tim. ii. 6; not with "silver and gold" but "the precious blood of Christ," 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; our purchased possession, Eph. i. 14;—II. By right of promise, confirmed by oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, Heb. vi. 18.

ARTICLE XXVII.

"Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God."

We read, of those who were made converts to the Christian religion on the day of Pentecost, that after they were baptized, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers," Acts ii. *v.* 42. And we read, of the Corinthians who were sanctified, that waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, they should be confirmed "unto the end," 1 Cor. i. 7, 8.

This portion of the xxvii Article is conformable to the event which occurred on the earliest administration of the rite of Baptism; when the converts were assured by the apostle, that God, by whom they were called, was faithful to perform his part to confer upon them the promised inheritance,

Our Saviour had in view the ordinance of baptism, when he conversed with Nicodemus, and told him, that except a man were born again he could not see the kingdom of God; by which he meant, that entire change and renovation of a man's mind and of all his powers, through which he must pass before he could discern the true character of the dispensation of the Messiah. That is the sense in which the kingdom of God,—our inheritance,—stands, throughout the Gospel.

When Nicodemus wondered at this expression, and seemed to take it literally, our Saviour said, more fully, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the *Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The meaning of this seems to be, that, except a man be *renewed* by an ablution, like the baptism which the Jews used, and which imported the outward profession of a change of doctrine, and of the heart; and, with that, except he be inwardly changed by a secret power called the *Spirit*, which will transform his nature, he cannot become one of Christ's disciples, or a true Christian. This is meant by his entering into the *kingdom of God*, or the dispensation of the Messias.

This Article shows the view which the Church has, with regard to the consummation of the rite of Baptism, by the true circumcision of the Spirit; the confirming of Faith, and increase of Grace, by prayer, to the attainment of the promises, Heb. x. 22; Acts ii. 42; Luke xi. 13; Col. i. 9, 10.

REFLECTIONS.

We may learn, from the services of the day, the great honor and dignity which Christianity confers upon its followers. It makes them heirs at present, and will, in due time, give them possession of a heavenly inheritance; not a kingdom whose glory will soon fade and vanish away, but a never failing kingdom, where a sceptre of righteousness shall be put into their hands, and an everlasting crown of glory placed upon their heads. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2.

We should ever highly estimate the sacred rite of baptism, which initiates us into all these rights, and confers upon us the glorious liberty of the sons of God; by means of which, we are received into the ark of Christ's Church, and thereby kept from sinking into everlasting ruin; and, by means of which, we receive the adoption of children, and a title to this everlasting inheritance.

We may hence learn, too, not only the excellency, but the necessity, of Baptism; for as we are thus so highly favored by it, so we would become miserable and undone without it. "Baptism doth also now save us," 1 Pet. iii. 21; by introducing us into the Church, and making us members of Christ's body, whereby we derive grace and strength from him, as our head. Before and without this, we are out of the Church, and so out of the covenanted way of salvation.

And let us bear in mind the conditions attached to

the privileges of baptism; the mortification of our evil desires and corrupt inclinations. A virtuous and religious temper is here absolutely requisite, not only to entitle, but to qualify and prepare, us for a virtuous and religious blessedness hereafter in heaven. If we neglect this, neither our Baptism, nor our instruction, nor our comprehension of the whole scheme of baptism, will avail us, but will rather increase our condemnation.

We should, finally, consider the importance and necessity of this Sacrament, wherever it may be had; and we should caution every one against a wilful neglect of it. At the commencement of the Gospel, all men "went out to John," to his baptism; and our Saviour then dignified the ordinance by submitting to it himself. His followers have accordingly been received, in this manner, into the Christian Church, to this day. Christ himself has declared, that they who do not follow him, in the regeneration now, shall not follow him, when he shall be revealed in his glory at the last day. Let all who are unbaptized, no longer defer it, but come at once, in obedience to his command, to this necessary and beneficial ordinance. And let those of us who have children not hesitate to afford them an opportunity, thus to become members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

Oh, trust them not!
Trust not yon world's deceitful smiles!
What are her joys, her glories what,
Her friendships? ah, but fatal wiles!
Then trust them not!

But fix thy heart
On friendship, that can ne'er decay:
Pleasure, unmingled with a smart;
Glory that shines through endless day;
There fix thy heart!

Oh, happy lot!
To rest from nature's inward strife!
Vain grief and vain desire forgot,
To taste, e'en here, the heavenly life;
Thrice happy lot!

The Epiphany.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS Feast derives its name from a word in the original Greek, which signifies *manifestation*. It was instituted to celebrate the manifestation of our Saviour in the flesh; but the term was anciently applied to Christmas-day, when Christ was manifested in the flesh, as well as to this day, on which the star appeared to manifest Christ to the wise men of the East.

It has been erroneously supposed, that the feasts of Christmas and Epiphany were anciently one and the same. The writings of the fathers (*a*) clearly show, that the two feasts were observed on different days. The purpose of the festival is thus recorded, in a sermon ascribed to St. Augustine, in which he mentions the reasons of the institution alleged by others: "On this

(*a*) Nazianzen, Jerome, Epiphanius, and Chrysostom, who wrote in the latter part of the fourth century. The first festival is that of Christ's birth; the next is that of the Theophany; says Epiphanius. And St. Chrysostom puts to himself the question, How came it to pass, that not the day of Christ's birth, but of his baptism, is called the Epiphany? which he resolves thus. "Because his birth was obscure, but, at his baptism, he manifestly appeared to all men." To the same effect: "The day of the Epiphany is at this day venerable." "I mean not Christ's Nativity,—as some suppose,—for then he rather hid himself and appeared not."

day we celebrate the mystery of God manifesting himself by his miracles in human nature; either, 1. Because this day the star in heaven gave notice of his birth; or, 2. Because he this day turned water into wine at the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee;—or 3. Because he consecrated water for the regeneration of mankind, by his baptism in the river Jordan;—or 4. Because with the five loaves he fed five thousand men." The first three causes our Church seems to own, in the conformity of her divine offices.

The festival of the Epiphany was observed with great solemnity, both by the Eastern and the Western Church. In the former, some of whose writers represent it to have had its origin from the baptism of Christ, it was observed as one of the solemn seasons for baptism, in common with Easter and Whitsuntide. In the Western Church, though not regarded as one of the solemn seasons for baptism, it was nevertheless observed with the same devotion as the Nativity, and other high festivals. Sermons were preached on it, the Holy Communion was celebrated, and all persons were allowed to rest from their labors, that they might attend the religious services of the day. It became the standing rule and custom, throughout both the Roman and the Visigoth dominions, to keep this festival of the Epiphany with great veneration, not allowing the courts of law to be open for judicial proceedings, nor the theatres for popular amusements. On this day is celebrated the first "manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles by the leading of a star," which is understood to have been principally in the contemplation of the Church.

THE EPIPHANY.

THE COLLECT.

O God, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thine only-begotten Son to the Gentiles, Matt. ii. 1, 2, 7–11; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Luke ii. 30, 31, 32.

Mercifully grant that we, who know thee now by faith, 1 John ii. 13; John xiv. 7–11; Hab. ii. 4; 2 Cor. v. 7; Gal. ii. 20; John xvi. 27, 30.

May after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead, Matt. xxv. 21; Rev. xxii. 3, 4; 1 John iii. 2; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

The Fruition of the Godhead: Heaven.

The Collect for the day particularizes *the manifestation of the only-begotten Son of God to the Gentiles, by the leading of a star.* The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising, Is. lx. 3. The coming of the long expected Messiah, was first an-

nounced to the *Jews*, by a message from heaven to simple and unlearned shepherds. Angels brought the tidings of great joy and declared, that a Saviour, "Christ the Lord," was born into the world.

His advent was signified to the *Gentiles*, by a mode which was adapted to the habits and disposition of those to whom the sign was sent. Wise men, or *Magi*, came from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews, "for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him," Matt. ii. 1, 2, 7–11. They were skilled in the study of the heavenly bodies, and were excited by curiosity, when they observed this star, (*a*) which shone day and night, fixed and radiant over the distant region of Judea. This star they were divinely directed to follow; and they were led by it to Jerusalem, where it was lost to them; but, on diligent inquiry, learning that the expected Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem, to that place they continued their journey. Again the star which they had seen in their eastern land "went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was," *v.* 9.

The humble shepherds of *Judea*, and the illustrious Magi of *the East*, with one heart and one mind, worshipped the Messiah. By this it is shown, that the Gospel is to be universally received, that all may be collected into one family, as children of a common Father. The call of the Gospel is universal, in the manifestation of the Saviour, to the unlearned shepherds and to the learned Magi of the East. The Almighty comprehends all nations, and all degrees of men,

This was not properly a *heavenly body*, but a *meteor light* floating near rth. This is the distinction between ἀστήρ and ἄστρον.

'ord here used, ἀστήρ, signifies a *meteor*, as in Homer's Iliad, iv. 75.

in one holy faith and in one blessed hope. Jews and Gentiles, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, noble and ignoble; these are called to salvation, that in the promised Saviour of the world every nation of the earth, every family, and every individual, may be blessed.

THE EPISTLE.—Eph. iii. 1–13.

The Epistle for the day declares to us "the great mystery of godliness," how God manifest in the flesh, who was first preached to the Jews only, was afterwards manifested to the Gentiles also, and thereby preached and believed on in the world. We see the Church rising up, like a wonderful structure which fills all earth and heaven; but in the Gospel which ensues, we are carried back a few years, and see only the corner-stone laid, which the builders rejected as unfit for their use, but which God through their rejection made the head of the corner; marvellous in our eyes, uniting thereby both Jew and Gentile in one.

The apostle, after giving an account of himself as appointed to preach, among the *Gentiles*, "the unsearchable riches of Christ," *v.* 8, proceeds to show the nature of the mystery,—or divine purpose as to the fellowship of Gentiles and Jews in the kingdom of Christ,—that there "might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God," who, in his almighty power, will prepare men, by his grace, for the state to which they may be called; so that *knowing him "now by faith," we "may after this life have the fruition of his glorious Godhead."* This is similar to other expressions used in Scripture; such as, "partakers of a divine nature," and

"being perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect." Thus, by the gathering of such a Church universal, the manifold wisdom of God will appear, not only to men, but to the several orders of angels, principalities and powers in heavenly places.

The several dispensations in different ages are now manifestly seen to conspire, in accomplishing the gracious purpose of God, from eternity, of saving all mankind by Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have freedom to make our requests to God, and have access with confidence of being heard through faith in him, in order that we may arrive at the highest degree of the knowledge and *fruition* of God, and an entire conformity to him.

THE GOSPEL.—St. Matt. ii. 1–12.

We have here an account of the visit of the *Magi* from the East to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" They gave him the title he was expected to have, who, in truth, is the spiritual king over his people; and they came to worship that king.

The chief particular which at this time claims our attention is, that they were *Gentiles*, aliens by nature, like ourselves, from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise. It was foretold, that the posterity of Japheth should one day "dwell in the tents of Shem," Gen. ix. 27; that in the promised seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth should be blessed, Gen. xii. 13; that to Shiloh should "the gathering of the people be," Gen. xlix. 10; Isa. xi. 10; xlix. 6; Ps. xxii. 27; xlvii. 9; cxvii.

The event so prominent in the gracious designs of the Almighty, which was thus predicted and celebrated by patriarchs and prophets, began, as at this season, to take place by the coming of the Eastern sages to Bethlehem, in the name of us all, as representatives of the heathen world. They were the first fruits of a glorious harvest, afterwards reaped and gathered by the apostles and their successors; they were the standard-bearers of that noble army, which, from the four quarters of the globe, hath since marched into the *Church*, through the gates mercifully thrown open to admit them. That Church is likened to *heaven:* she is of a heavenly origin; her holiness is similar to that of *heaven;* in her, God, his angels, and holy people reside, and through her men are brought to the regions of the blessed. Its sun, and moon, and stars, are Scripture revelation, instituted ordinances, and ministers, Rev. viii. 12.

When we meditate on the wonderful appearance of the star to the *Magi*, which led them to the birth-place of the Messiah, we should remember, that as the pillar of fire guided the children of Israel to the promised land, so a star led these wise men to the promised Saviour,—the bright and morning star, which is the token of God's promise with them, a precursor of heaven; for he is the light, and he goes before his people as their guide; constituting that full and perfect knowledge which believers shall have when, in heaven, they shall see God face to face.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISA. LX.

This and the two following chapters are said to contain the ground-work of the prophecies; the restoration of the Jews from captivity. The prophet thence takes occasion to describe the glories of Christ's kingdom, which began upon the first publication of the Gospel, but will not be completed "till the fulness of the Jews and Gentiles" are come into the Church. He calls upon Jerusalem "to arise from the dust," *v.* 1, where her afflictions had prostrated her; and, like the morning star, or like the sun, to give light to all about her, thus communicating to others part of that honor and lustre which she had received from God, the true Sun of righteousness, Mal. iv. 2.

Multitudes are described as coming to the Church, from all parts; those who, like the Queen of Sheba, had heard the report; or, like the wise men, had seen the star. The multitudes are likened to the innocent and harmless doves, in their lowly flight from their prisons to their homes;—fit emblems of humanity,—taking refuge in the Church, the Word, and the ordinances, with speed and zeal, Jer. v. 26; lx. 8. There is mentioned also the beauty given to the ordinances, "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary," *v.* 13. Those magnificent cedars of Lebanon, which furnished materials for building the Temple of Jerusalem, 2 Chron. ii. 16, shall make "the place of my feet glorious."

The prophet seems to rise from the happy days of the Church on earth to the consummation of her bliss in heaven, where they shall need neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, but shall enjoy the bright presence of God, "their everlasting light and glory." "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory," *v.* 19. No cloud shall interrupt the blissful vision. No darkness of affliction, desertion, or temptation, shall for a moment intervene; but blessedness, abiding and eternal as the source from whence it flows, shall be the happy portion of the redeemed. The prosperity, tranquillity, and continuance, of the Church on earth, is no imperfect representation of the happiness of heaven.

Second Lesson, ROM. XI.

The apostle, in this chapter, shows, that the rejection of the Jews was not inconsistent with the promise made to Abraham; but, although they were not altogether cast off, upon their refusal, the Gentiles according to God's pleasure, received salvation. "The fall of them" should be "the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles," *v.* 12, and, eventually, his people would be received again into the Church, "and they also, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again," *v.* 23, to the olive tree from which they had been "broken off."

After endeavoring to satisfy the Jews, with the divine

appointment of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, on *their* refusal to receive it; and teaching, that "God had concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all," *v.* 32, he breaks forth into words of praise and adoration of "the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" *v.* 33; and he sums up the whole in the words, "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever, Amen."

In this sublime manner, the apostle has finished his discourse concerning the dispensations of religion in the different ages of the world; and, from his account it appears, that these dispensations were adapted to the circumstances of mankind at that time; that they are parts of a great plan formed by God for delivering the human race from the evil consequences of sin, and exalting them to the highest perfection of which their nature is capable; and that, both in its progress and its accomplishment, the scheme of man's salvation contributes to the establishment of God's moral government, and to the display of his perfection to the whole intelligent creation. He finally ascribes to God "glory forever," for his unerring wisdom and knowledge, and for his counsels and purposes, by which we have the comfortable assurance of enjoying the perfection of happiness hereafter.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISA. XLIX.

From the Jewish captivity which the prophet had foretold, he shows the enlargement of the Church in future time, by the conversion of the Jews, and the fulness of the Gentiles; and when he lifts his voice, exclaiming, "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people," *v.* 13, it is because of the expected return of the Jews from their captivity, and because that event was typical of the salvation which was to be expected through Christ, and was to become the occasion of joy to the Church.

As in the first morning lesson, here again there is the promise, that multitudes shall come to the Church, from every quarter. "All these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all," *v.* 10. The Church, too, is to receive a homage from royalty. "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers;" and, in the lowest humility, "they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet," *v.* 23.

A fulfilment of this portion of prophecy may be seen, when, subsequent to the return of the Jews from their captivity, great and singular favors having been shown to them by Darius, Artaxerxes, and other Persian monarchs, as *nursing fathers*, Esther the queen also proved herself a *nursing mother*, who saved her whole nation from destruction. A more remarkable fulfil-

ment may be seen, in the favors which Constantine, and Helen his mother, and other Christian princes and princesses, have shown to the Church, protecting it under their government. The prophecy in this and the morning lesson, relates especially to the Jews' deliverance out of Babylon; but it has a further intention, in pointing to the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, of whom Cyrus and the prophet himself were types.

Second Lesson, JOHN II. *to v.* 12.

The miracle mentioned in this chapter the Evangelist declares to have been performed by our Lord, to manifest forth his glory. He thereby proved himself to be the Son of God, and his glory to be that of the only-begotten of the Father; and he discovered also the nature and end of his office. The power of God, and the grace of a Saviour, appeared in all his miracles, and particularly in this manifested glory of the long-expected Messiah; and it laid the grounds of faith, because it immediately follows, that "his disciples believed on him."

All the miracles of Christ were performed for public notice, and for general conviction. They were designed, to rank among the solid and perpetual proofs, that he came forth from God; and to serve as fixed and never-failing grounds of faith, according to our Lord's reply to the disciples of John the Baptist, Matt. xi. 4, 5, and to his appeal in terms so plain to the Jews, John x. 37, 38. Thus does our Lord himself lead our attention, in the strongest manner, to one main pillar of our common hope. He teaches us, at all times, whence we are to

draw some of the leading proofs of that which we believe, and to establish the certainty of our persuasion.

Instead of high pretensions, attested by no public facts, and instead of plausible discourses to mislead the world, our Lord points directly to his miracles. They were seen of all, being done in public, wrought in the sight of thousands, frequently repeated, and always calculated for the best and noblest ends. By these miracles, our Lord proved himself to be the Son of God, and his glory to be that of the only-begotten Son of the Father. By the word *glory*, (*a*) the Jews meant the visible signs of God's presence.

ARTICLE XVII.

"Drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm *their faith of eternal salvation* to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God."

We have prayed to our heavenly Father in the Collect, *that we who know him now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of his glorious Godhead;* and the Church speaks of the godly consideration of the doctrine contained in this Article, and of its tendency, in drawing up the mind to high and heavenly things, "as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm our faith of eternal salvation."

The attention given by different portions of the Christian community,—divided chiefly into Calvinists and Arminians,—to the subject of a future state, has led

(*a*) Δόξα.

to conflicting views, which the Church has endeavored to reconcile by this Article. Both parties seem concerned to assert the honor of God and of his attributes; both agree, that, whatever is fixed as the primary idea of God, all other things must be explained so as to be consistent with that; both seem zealous for God and his glory; both lay down general maxims which are hardly to be disputed; and both argue justly from their first principles. These are grounds for mutual charity and forbearance in these matters.

There are, however, certain points in which all agree: that mercy is freely offered to the world in Jesus Christ; that God did freely offer his Son to be our propitiation, and has freely accepted the sacrifice of his death in our stead, whereas he might have condemned every man to perish for his own sins; that God does, in the dispensation of his Gospel, and the promulgation of it to the nations, act according to the freedom of his grace, for reasons which are to us past finding out; that every man is inexcusable in the sight of God; that all men are bound to obey the rules set before them in the Gospel, and are to expect neither mercy nor favor from God, but as they set themselves diligently about that; and, finally, that at the last day all men shall be judged, not according to secret decrees, but according to their own works, Phil. iii. 20; 1 John i. 3; 2 Thess. ii. 15, 17; Rom. viii. 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39; 1 John iv. 19; Psal. lxxiii. 15.

CATECHISM.

Creed :—" The Life everlasting."

Life signifies the state of the righteous after death, Matt. vii. 14; xix. 16, 17. They will be raised to everlasting happiness, and become fellow-citizens of angels and saints in heaven. "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore," Ps. xvi. 11.

There is no reason to think, that the godly shall be equally glorified. Their blessedness will be apportioned to their different degrees of zeal and holiness; the lowest degree of bliss in heaven will, however, be such as far to exceed any conceptions we can possibly form, Matt. xvi. 27; Luke xix. 16–19; John xiv. 2; 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. In the Old Testament, God promises, to those who observe his laws, long life and temporal prosperity; which were the figure and shadow of eternal life, and of these future blessings expressed more clearly in the New Testament. The carnal Jews confined their hopes to transitory blessings; but the holy patriarchs, the prophets, and the more enlightened Hebrews, carried their views and expectations further. Moses says, "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil, Deut. xxx. 15, 19, 20.

As the condition of the wicked is described by *death*, the greatest of all punishments, so the state of the righteous is represented by *life*, (*a*) the greatest of all blessings, John v. 29. And this is a fit emblem to represent

(*a*) Ζωή, "for," says St. Augustine, "there is no true life without happiness."

that blessed state, in which they shall live with God, in all the happiness that their hearts can wish, or their natures can be capable of; for they shall always see and enjoy God, the fountain of all good; they shall live in the blessed society of saints, and angels, and glorified spirits, with constant intercourse and affection. They shall be completely happy, in body and soul; free, in their bodies, from the pains and infirmities that affect them here, Rev. vii. 16; xxi. 4;—their senses, both sight and hearing, shall be delighted with what the heart could not conceive of in this world; their understandings shall be secured from error, ignorance, and doubt, and be filled with knowledge, 1 Cor. xiii. 12; and their wills shall be brought into perfect conformity to the will of God, 1 John iii. 2. To crown this happiness, it shall be "life everlasting."

REFLECTIONS.

The sacred narrative of the conduct of the wise men, presents to us an instructive example. Let us observe and imitate their zeal, conspicuous at the beginning and throughout the whole progress of their journey; and their joy in the divine mercy, which led them to leave their own dwellings at the appearance of the star, and to continue their travels in search of the new-born king, fearlessly carrying the tidings of a suspected rival to the city and court of a jealous tyrant, and, acting readily on the information received from the Chief Priests and Scribes, persisting in their purpose, and prefiguring by their zeal that of other Gentiles,

As the wise men, by their *star*, so we, by *faith*, are led to the knowledge of God. Our Collect prays, that God would grant us "after this life" to have "the fruition of his glorious Godhead." If we are sincere in offering up this petition, let us imitate the example of the first worshippers. Though we do not bring presents, as they did, we can bring honor to our heavenly king, devotion to our God, and a heart "dead unto sin but alive unto righteousness," and animated by the hope that we may have the fruition of the glorious Godhead in the kingdom of Christ. When the star of Judah rose over Bethlehem, as a harbinger of the Sun of righteousness, other lands were sunk in the night of heathenism. Clouds and darkness rested upon them.

But the darkness is gone; a brighter day than that which Judah saw, now enlightens *us*. Every where temples are now raised to the honor of the true God; and the worshippers confess no other Lord. Do we rejoice, in being free from the spiritual darkness of former ages? Are we grateful, for the light which shines upon us in its full lustre? Do we prize this light, as the inestimable gift of God by his Son Jesus Christ? Do we glory in it, as a brighter light than shone for the eastern Magi? Let us, then, yield ourselves to the guidance of the light which now shineth for us; and taking *faith* for our *star*, let us follow as it guides, until we are led to the Son of God, and are through him conducted to "the fruition" of the "glorious Godhead," where we shall find, in our Messiah, not the lowly Jesus entering upon a world of trouble, but Christ the Lord, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Head and Ruler over all!

THE LEADING STAR.

And who are they, yon ancient men from Sheba's spicy land,
Who journey on, a pilgrim train, o'er wastes of burning sand?
Those ancient men are sages, versed in science' varied store,
But most in heavenly musings nursed, and astronomic lore.

And what is that, yon brilliant star, whereon their eyes are placed,
Which beams with steadfast light from far across the trackless waste?
That brilliant star no fellow deem of such as gild the night,
'Tis hung in heaven, with mystic beam to guide those sages right.

Faith, deep and strong, of heavenly source, fruit of no earthly soil!
Which bore them through their tedious course of peril, care, and toil,
Nor stumbled at their place of rest: but in that mean abode
The long-sought babe their king confest: their king, perchance their God.

Their faith be mine! be mine to tread, where God shall point the way:
Nor let fatigue my steps impede, nor danger's face dismay!
Be mine to mark with steadfast look his guiding sign from far,
And in his own enlightening book still find my leading star!

See them bending in the manger,
  Sages who have come from far
To behold the heavenly stranger,
  Guided by his herald star.
See on high that bright attendant
  Pause to point their journey done;
Where, with righteousness resplendent
  Smiles in clouds the new-born Son.

To that Son the sages kneeling,
  And their treasures opening, view.
May I have their holy feeling,
  Kneel, and ope my bosom too!
Well with gladness they return;
  Those may bid adieu to sadness,
Who a Saviour theirs discern.

Well the wondrous scene engages
  All that have a heart to bring;
Angels, shepherds, saints, and sages,
  Christians here, adore your king!
Let me join the happy legion,
  Varied, vast, yet one in love;
Join on earth, and in the region
  Where they circle CHRIST above.

The First Sunday after the Epiphany.

From Christmas-day to the Epiphany, the Church's design, in all her proper services, is to set forth the humanity of our Saviour, and to manifest him in the flesh. But, from the Epiphany to Septuagesima Sunday, especially the next four Sundays after Epiphany, she endeavors to manifest his divinity, by recounting to us, in the Gospel, some of his first miracles, and manifestations of his divine nature.

THE COLLECT.

O Lord, we beseech thee, mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people who call upon thee, Ps. lxix. 13, 14; 1 John v.14; Ps. vi. 9.

And grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, Ps. cxix. 18; xxv. 4, 5; xxxvii. 11; Job xxxiv. 32; Rom. vii. 18; Ps. xxxii. 8; Col. i. 9, 10; Exod. xxxiii. 13.

And also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. 1 Kings viii. 57, 58; 1 Pet. i. 14; Heb. xii. 28; Phil. ii. 13; Rev. ii. 10; Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

Illumination, or knowledge of our duty; and the Sacrifice of Obedience.

The Collect is itself suggestive of the means of obtaining a right judgment in all things, through prayer, because it is written, "whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you," John xvi. 23. Our petition is, that God will *mercifully receive our prayers;* that he would inspire our souls with holy thoughts and good resolutions, so that, whatever doubts and difficulties may arise, we may neither be cast down by surprise, nor dismayed by unforeseen trials, but may be enlightened to see the right way, to know it, and to follow it; may *both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same.* Obedience is the necessary consequence of such illumination.

When King Solomon prayed to the Lord for "an un-

derstanding heart" to "discern between good and evil," God gave him his desire, and put this condition upon the long enjoyment of it, "If thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days," 1 Kings iii. 12, 14. It becomes us to apply our understanding to the fulfilment of all our Christian duties, so clearly placed before us in the Scriptures, trusting in God; and, whether prosperity be in store for us to prove our integrity; or adversity be reserved to try our faith, we should be convinced by the daily experience of our own weakness, that he only can give us *grace and power*, in time of need, *faithfully to fulfil* his commands.

Thus, by prayer, with humility and thankfulness, casting all our care upon the Lord, we acknowledge, that a Christian should "rejoice always" in God his Saviour, knowing that prayer gains for us the aid of the Holy Spirit, to build up the ruins of our fallen nature, and raises the soul to its original structure as a temple of the living God, 1 Cor. iii. 16; upon the strong foundations of faith and obedience.

THE EPISTLE.—Rom. xii. *to v.* 6.

The apostle had cleared and confirmed the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, the unsearchable riches and goodness of God in grafting the *Gentiles* into the stock of Israel, so that they became partakers of the promises made to the Jews. He now enforces the principal duties of a religion, which is intended, not only to order our conversation, but to inform our *judgment*, and

reform our hearts and lives. The entire system has its foundation in Christian knowledge and faith.

As our Saviour was obedient to the law, so should we, in obedience to the law of Christ our Passover sacrificed for us, present ourselves "a living sacrifice," *our whole lives* holy, acceptable to God, which is our "reasonable service." In him alone is all reasonable service and filial obedience. He is the new man, to whom we are to be transformed, day by day, by the renewing of our mind. The Church, having celebrated the goodness of God in the manifestation of his Son and his truth to the Gentiles, makes it her next care, to urge the same practical doctrine, declaring the necessity of our walking "worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called," Eph. iv. 1.

Holiness, and virtue, and every good word and work, ought to be the fruit of our *clearer knowledge.* And the mercies of God exhibited to Christians, should constitute the strong motive; for this purpose, here are specified the particular good qualities which the mercies he has dwelt on should produce. These Christian duties are here illustrated in a striking and impressive manner. "As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." The nature of this union is shown, from several passages of Scripture which mention it; and these various texts serve to illustrate one another, figuring the entire concern and interest we have in our blessed Lord and in one another; a union peculiar to Christians, having the same principles of religion, the same laws, the same privileges of grace, the same hopes of glory, and the same sacraments; "one Lord, one faith, one baptism;" all joined

to Christ as the mystical head *of the body of one Church.* Each member should act for the good and benefit of the whole, and of every other member; and being members of Christ's body, we should have his humility in the exercise of our knowledge for our mutual good, to know well our place and duties; *and faithfully to fulfil the same.*

THE GOSPEL.—St. Luke ii. 41.

The Gospel for the day contains an account, which, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, has been given to us, of our blessed Saviour's life from his infancy to his baptism, and of his entrance upon his prophetic office; and the Epistle for the day is connected, in a beautiful manner, with the Gospel.

This Gospel exhibits, in the divine child, an example of lowly obedience,—the Lord and king of Heaven found in the Temple, sitting "in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions;"—and the effectual mode of obtaining knowledge,—submitting to be taught by them. At twelve years of age, he is fulfilling all righteousness, being present at Jerusalem, and in the Temple, a pattern of obedience to the law through which we by faith shall be joined to him, shall in him keep the Passover, shall offer up an acceptable sacrifice, and shall worship him in spirit and in truth, in that better temple which is his Church.

St. Luke had said of him, that he was "filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him," *v.* 40. And the prophet Isaiah said, that "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him," and "make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," Isa. xi. 2, 3. A

holy child, by being attentive to divine things, becomes wise beyond his years: "I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation," Ps. cxix. 99. "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts," *v.* 100. These are gracious intimations of the mode by which we may *both perceive and know what things we ought to do.*

While Christ acted as a man, there was something that bore witness to his Godhead; as here, when he replies to his mother's question, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Although he withdrew himself from his parents' authority, for his heavenly duties, yet for worldly duties he became subject unto them, and obedient to their commands. He here gives an example to all children, to be dutiful and obedient to their parents in the Lord; for, although he was the Son of God, when he had fulfilled at this time "his Father's business," he went down with his parents and came to Nazareth, and "was subject unto them." (*a*)

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISA. XLIV.

This lesson begins with comfortable promises to the Jews, after previous threatenings in the last chapter. The supreme power and foreknowledge of the one true God are set forth in a sublime manner, in contrast with the weakness of man's judgment, and the absurdity of idol worship. The blessings they are to receive, it is

(*a*) For reverence of parental authority, strongly enforced by the prophets, by the holy apostles, and by Christ himself, Ezek. xxii. 7; Mal. iv. 6; Rom. i. 30; 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2; Eph. vi. 1; Col. iii. 20; Luke ii. 51.

now shown, will proceed, in a great measure, from their acknowledgment of the divine power and excellency. "Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any," *v.* 8.

The prophet then proceeds to arm them against idolatry, upon the same grounds and with the same arguments as in ch. xl. He exhorts them to put their whole trust in God. He exposes the weakness and folly of idol-makers; their idols being senseless things. "They have not known, nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand," *v.* 18. He proceeds to show how absurd it is, for a man to prepare his food and make his god from the same piece of wood: or to suppose, that because it is fashioned and carved into the figure of a human being, it has more of divinity in it than when it was the unhewn part of the tree. "And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire," *v.* 19. In a distempered body, with depraved appetites and a deluded soul, "he feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside," *v.* 20. Here they find, how God, by delivering his people out of the adversary's hand, "turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish," *v.* 25.

While the Jews are represented as unconscious of the mode of their deliverance from Babylon, they are promised the assistance they should have, by means of that person who was to act as God's instrument to deliver them from bondage, "that saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure." In the

presence of the Almighty it was established, who should act as the deliverer of his people; their knowledge was limited only to that time; and as God discovered to them the folly and madness of false prophets, so he punctually fulfilled the prediction of his own prophets. The title of "my servant" eminently belongs to the Messiah, in this prophecy, who was "that Prophet who should come into the world;" and it is the most remarkable of all in Scripture, because here Cyrus is called, by his name, more than a century before he was born, xlv. 4.

Second Lesson, MATT. II. *v.* 13.

The flight of Joseph with the holy child and his mother into Egypt, to avoid the cruelty of Herod, is here narrated. The parents had no apprehension of any evil; but it is anticipated, and the remedy is provided. "The angel of the Lord" appeared to Joseph "in a dream," in like manner as the divine will had been communicated to the Magi, who were "warned of God in a dream." This was a temporary return of the patriarchal dispensation, when angels were the usual messengers of heaven to men; their ministry being evidently continued, to the close of that dispensation.

Since that period, we have a more sure word of prophecy, and we should less willingly trust to visions, Heb. i. 14; Ps. xci. 11, 12.—Joseph was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, in his departure to that country, and his abiding there according to the directions which he received, "and be thou there until I bring thee word," *v.* 13, although it presented every reasonable objection, as a place of security, to one who did not see "as God

seeth." The children of Israel had there suffered the most cruel bondage; and, at all times, Egypt was remarkable for its idolatry, and its hatred of other religious worshippers. The cause of their present flight would naturally remind these parents, of Egyptian cruelty to infants, which caused the voice of lamentation, in Rama, of "Rachel weeping for her children." Notwithstanding all this, Joseph obeyed; and he remained in Egypt until another dream required his return "into the land of Israel," *v.* 19.

We find a further trial of his faithfulness, in the occurrence of another vision, whereby he is made to turn aside into Galilee, *v.* 22. Herod was an Edomite, bred up with enmity to Israel; and his hands were red with the blood of many victims, among which were three of his own children. He now sent forth and slew "all the children that were in Bethlehem," and occasioned a supernatural interference for the preservation of the holy child.

These circumstances are illustrative of the truth, that we may ever rely on God's providential care, "casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you," 1 Pet. v. 7. And while we act obediently to his holy direction and counsels, he will *grant us "to perceive and know what things" we "ought to do,"* and will also give us "grace and power *faithfully to fulfil the same.*"

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISA. XLV.

The subject of the last chapter is continued in this, concerning the commission from God to Cyrus, and his success in the execution of it. The title of *anointed* is given to Cyrus, as to David and other kings of the Jews, who were God's immediate deputies, to show that he was raised up to be an instrument of Providence in restoring the Jews from their captivity.

That the deliverance here foretold was a figure of the redemption of Christ, plainly appears from several passages in this chapter, particularly from *v.* 8, 17, 20. Again the Almighty asserts his supremacy over all false gods. "That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else," *v.* 6. It is said, as if spoken to Cyrus, his shepherd, to show him the sin and ignorance of the worshippers of idols, as his own nation was given to idolatry. All that men desire or would avoid, *good* and *evil*,—which the Persian Magi denominated *light* and *darkness*;—their divinities, are subject to his control. "I form the light, and create darkness. I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things," *v.* 7.

After applying this doctrine, for the consolation of those of the Jews who were looking for the promised Redeemer, "let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation," *v.* 8. The enemies of the Church are reproved for their impiety and defiance of God's judgments, impeaching his

wisdom, and questioning his power, as they do who are insensible of the claims of parental authority. "Wo unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?" The prophet thus calls upon them to submit to the will of God their Father. None of their idols have given such proofs of their divinity, by foreshowing things to come. "Who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time?" *v.* 21. And then, with the invitation to look to him and be saved, obedience to his commands, and submission to his will are enforced, by the solemn declaration, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear," *v.* 23.

Second Lesson, 1 Cor. iii.

The Corinthians are here admonished by the apostle, on account of their divisions and party feelings; and they are exhorted to cultivate Christian union, as the effectual means of obtaining wisdom and stability. The apostle endeavors, under the figure of a husbandman, to direct their attention to God, as the only source of grace and knowledge. He says, that whatever labor was bestowed by any of them on planting or watering, he should be rewarded, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor," *v.* 6, 8.

By another figure he reminds them, that *he* had laid the foundation of that which should be the superstruc-

ture; "but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon: for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," *v.* 10, 11. He tells them, that they constituted that building, "the temple of God;" and that if any man defile that temple, consecrated to his service, "him shall God destroy."

False teachers had doubtless affected much of Pagan or Rabbinical learning, either of which, not according with the simplicity of Scripture, would have a tendency to corrupt the Church of God; for as the wisdom of God was foolishness with man, so is "the wisdom of this world" "foolishness with God," *v.* 19. Christians need not contend, respecting the comparative merits of their preachers, as they and their people have a mutual interest, in all things, *v.* 21, 22.

When we pray that we may "*both perceive and know what things*" *we* "*ought to do*," it is by reason of our own insufficient knowledge and powers, which will prompt us with such feelings to recive instruction, for the attainment of everlasting wisdom. We are then within the rule prescribed by the apostle, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise," *v.* 18. "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom," Prov. xi. 2.

CATECHISM.

"That I should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life."

This is the third condition of our covenant at Baptism, which is not merely to know the will of God, or to keep his commandments in remembrance, but to live in obedience to the one, and in observance of the other, Matt. xxviii. 20; Heb. x. 36; xiii. 21. Our reason must submit to a higher and better guide; our actions must conform to the divine will and wisdom, which is the source of all sanctity and goodness. Nor is it sufficient, if we conform externally; for, beside the act done, our heart must be made a sacrifice, and choose the duty because God commands it.

We may be well assured, that in order to *perceive and know what things we ought to do*, we should act in conformity with his holy will and commandments, so plainly made known to us in Scripture. We engage to *keep* and *walk* in God's holy will and commandments, that is, to observe and obey them, wholly, actively, perseveringly, and improvingly, Deut. xi. 22. Wholly, James ii. 10, 11; actively, Heb. vi. 11, 12; steadily, James i. 25; perseveringly, 2 Pet. ii. 21; improvingly, 2 Pet. iii. 18; 1 Thess. iv. 1, 2.

Such obedience, to render it acceptable, must have three qualifications:—1. It must be *sincere*, void of hypocrisy or corrupt designs in serving him, and should therefore proceed from an inward principle of love, inclining us to obey his laws, for his own sake and because he commands them, "my son, give me thy heart," Prov.

xxiii. 26:—2. It must be *entire*, an obedience of the whole man, to the whole will of God. All the faculties and powers of soul and body are to be exercised and employed in his service. We must love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind:—3. It must be *constant, to walk in the same all the days of my life;* not to falter or tire in our Christian course. It is not sufficient to serve and obey God occasionally, and to be zealous and cold in the performance of our duties at times; but, to approve ourselves as God's faithful servants and soldiers, our service should be constant and uniform, and our obedience should last unto our life's end. "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity," all his righteousness shall not be mentioned, and "in his sin that he hath sinned," shall he die, Ezek. xviii. 24. It is they who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, that shall have eternal life, Rom. ii. 7.

ARTICLE VII.

Although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.

Every law published in Scripture is either Ceremonial, Judicial, or Moral; a distinction intimated in the words. Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, Deut. vi. 1, where, by command-

ments are to be understood the Moral;—by statutes, the Ceremonial;—and by judgments, the Judicial law of God.

The Church tells us in this article, that ceremonies and rites *do not bind Christian men.* "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law," Heb. vii. 12. And as to the Judicial law, "the Civil precepts thereof" ought not "of *necessity* to be received in any commonwealth," that is, precepts we find in the law of Moses concerning state policy, or the civil government of the Jewish nation, with respect to magistrates, contracts, inheritances, punishments, and other secular matters. We are commanded to obey other laws, "to be subject unto the higher powers," Rom. xiii. 1; to submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake.

But it is the MORAL LAW which is here principally regarded. This law, established by God, stands unrepealed; and our Lord, Christ himself, the maker of all laws, tells us of this Moral law,—the Ten Commandments,—that he did not come to destroy it. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil," Matt. v. 17. He did not come to take away any of its potency, but rather to increase it; and therefore, when one came unto him desiring *a right judgment*, and inquiring *in the spirit of this day's Collect*, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Matt. xix. 16, Jesus answered him, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt

love thy neighbor as thyself," 17, 18, 19. From this it appears, that he does not repeal, but confirm, the *Moral Law*, Rom. vii. 12; Matt. v. 17 to 20; James ii. 8, 10, 11; 1 John iii. 4; Eccl. xii. 13; Acts xv.

REFLECTIONS.

We have been taught, in the various exercises of this day, in what consists the right judgment which we ask for in our prayers to God, that *we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and* also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same. It is briefly comprehended in the words, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven," Matt. vii. 21.

We may infer from this the folly and presumption of those, who expect the blessings of a covenant, without performing the conditions; for God has promised to be our God, and to bestow many and great blessings upon us, provided we engage to be his people, and keep his commandments. Especially have we presented to us on this day, in the example of our Saviour, the duty of filial obedience. Christ is manifested to us, on other occasions, in the great offices of his mission, and in his baptism, temptation, and ministry; in working miracles, and in proclaiming his Gospel. In all those circumstances, he is necessarily more removed from the daily condition and situation of us all, than in this most impressive incident of his early youth, when we find him sitting, as a disciple, at the feet of those who were in the

seat of Moses; lost to others, in his love of divine wisdom, and retiring to the humble house of his parents, to pass many years in subjection and obedience. (*a*)

The lesson we may learn from the services of this day, but especially from this early incident in our Saviour's life, is this: if we look around us and in ourselves, we find "trouble about many things," because many are the objects which men desire, and therefore there are many fears and hopes, which gather strength and increasing disquietude, until the pursuits of men are beset with various temptations, and many wants, envious fears, unprofitable cares, and transient pleasures. These leave no traces, but cause our hearts to become more entangled and deceived by the world. But if we meditate on the great duty of being faithful to the will of God, and obedient to his commandments, we shall have daily and increasing confidence, that he will give us his *grace* "*faithfully to fulfil the same.*"

By cool Siloam's shady rill
  How sweet the lily grows!
How sweet the breath, beneath the hill,
  Of Sharon's dewy rose.

Lo, such the child whose early feet
  The paths of peace have trod;
Whose secret heart, with influence sweet,
  Is upward drawn to God.

By cool Siloam's shady rill,
  The lily must decay;
The rose that blooms beneath the hill,
  Must shortly fade away.

(*a*) Before entering on his ministry, he waited thirty years; until he reached the age prescribed by the Jewish law for taking the Priest's office.

And soon, too soon, the wintry hour
  Of man's maturer age,
Will shake the soul with sorrow's power,
  And stormy passion's rage!

O Thou, whose infant feet were found
  Within thy Father's shrine!
Whose years, with changeless virtue crown'd,
  Were all alike divine;

Dependent on thy bounteous breath,
  We seek thy grace alone;
In childhood, manhood, age, and death,
  To keep us still thine own.

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany.

THE COLLECT.

Almighty and everlasting God, who dost govern all things in heaven and earth, Ps. ciii. 19; Dan. iv. 17; Ps. xxii. 28.

Mercifully hear the supplications of thy people, 2 Chron. vi. 21; Ps. iv. 1.

And grant us thy peace all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. John xiv. 27; Rom. xv. 13; 2 Thess. iii. 16; Prov. xvi. 7; Phil. iv. 6, 7.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

Supplication for Peace: Meekness.

The Collect ascribes to Almighty God the government of all things in heaven and earth. And he alone can compose the jarring elements of this earth, "which

stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people," Ps. lxv. 7. As prayer is the means of attaining a settled peace of mind, superior to all the conflicts of this life and to all its accidents, we beseech him, *mercifully to hear our supplications.* Thus we lead the soul to God, and fix it upon him, as that Being who can either save us altogether from spiritual trials, or can support us under them; either lead us not into temptation, or deliver us from the evil it might bring with it. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee," Isa. xxvi. 3.

The prayer is composed with a strict regard to the natural workings of the human mind; the sentiments of awe with which we contemplate God in his majesty, as the Governor of heaven, would sink into fear, if they were not regulated by feelings of confidence in his love, when we meditate upon him, as also the Governor of the world. The Peace we pray for, is that reconciliation and love, that tranquillity of mind, which is the result of sins forgiven, and a sense of justification before God. It is that peace which he came to shed over the earth; and the joyful expectation of this was the song of the heavenly hosts, at his birth. And in his valedictory discourse to his disciples he left to them Peace, as the richest legacy he could bequeath. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you," John xiv. 27. It is this which produces meekness and gentleness of spirit, and control of the passions, conducing not only to the inward quiet of our own minds, but to peaceable intercourse with others. It is because the safety of men's lives and persons depends much upon the practice of this virtue, that the apostle has earnestly enforced it, as a rule of conduct,

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men," Rom. xii. 18. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14.

THE EPISTLE.—Rom. xii. 6–16.

The Epistle for last Sunday, declared the close union between Christians, as "one body in Christ, and every one members one of another," *v.* 5. That portion of the Epistle comprised those obligations which result from this union.

The portion now before us enjoins other sacred duties, on the same ground of union: 1. Contentedness and fidelity in our several stations; 2. Diligence in our proper business; 3. Mutual affection and respect; and 4. A tender concern for the prosperous and adverse fortunes of our fellow-Christians. We are reminded, that all those endowments by which any one man excels another, are gifts; mere instances of favor, and acquired by no efforts of our own, being so many streams of grace issuing from one common source of undeserved and overflowing mercy; all from the same Spirit of God.

Every one of us, therefore, should be content; grateful for the blessing, and faithful in his duty, considering that this inequality of gifts is not only just and prudent, but necessary, because "the body is not one member, but many," 1 Cor. xii. 14.

In connection with the sacred relation of members of the Redeemer's body, to him and to each other, the

apostle further enjoins the Christian duties of patience and *meekness* under persecution and wrongs. "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not," *v.* 14. Be at all times like him who was full of blessing, even to the unthankful and the evil; to those who knew him not; to those who knew not, that what they received was from him, their unknown benefactor. All our duties may be summed up in the words, "Let love be without dissimulation," *v.* 9; the foundation of all our mutual duty arising from purity of heart, which promotes kindly affections. "In honor preferring one another," and "distributing" to the necessities of one another. "For the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then *peaceable*, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy," James iii. 17.

THE GOSPEL.—St. John ii. 1.

The miracle which is here mentioned, is the first that was performed by our Saviour; and it is on account of the words uttered by him on the occasion, that this Gospel was appointed by the Church to be read and published at the season of the Epiphany.

Epiphany is the manifestation of Christ's glory and divine mission, of which this Gospel is a testimony. And because it was the first manifestation of himself, after his baptism, and the beginning of his ministry, it was also appointed as the second lesson in the Evening Service on the day of the Epiphany. It was shortly after our Lord's baptism, when St. John the Baptist had declared him to be "the Lamb of God, which taketh away

the sin of the world," John i. 29. "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage"—thereby, as St. Augustine has said, giving his divine sanction to the institution of marriage;—and when his mother said to him, "They have no wine," Jesus replied, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." The working of miracles was according to his divinity, and not according to his humanity, which he had received from a human mother, and in which he was not to be controlled by a parent, to whom he had been subject according to the flesh, and for this manifestation of himself, "his hour was not yet come."

The lesson taught by his Gospel is *love*. There was nothing in the words of the Prophets, Apostles, and Saints, in the Church, which partakes of the character of this incident; where there is such loving condescension to the common ways of life, a willingness to promote good feelings, and peace, and happiness, by cultivating the social affections; and not only that, but such a condescension to the occasion, as might be deemed beyond the reach of the religious teacher, raising and sanctifying them by the presence and influence of divine meekness, and love, showing us that God must be considered and remembered as present.

It is in wonderful meekness, as man also, that he instructs us. He was, at that time, not yet as one in authority, nor as a divine teacher; for he was not as yet known as such, except to a few who afterwards became his disciples. It was one of those trivial circumstances, which nothing but tenderness and loving kindness would have noticed. To have been at the

marriage was, humanly speaking, not to be expected of this teacher from God, so wise and good; but when there, to have sympathized in such wants, was the perfecting of his example of condescending meekness.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISA. LL.

The prophet here exhorts the believing Jews of the captivity, to rely on the promises of God: "for the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord," *v.* 3. All this should be eminently fulfilled in Christ. In all their distress and persecutions, they have the assurance, that the same power which was exerted in their behalf should again be put forth. The arm of the Lord had done great things in the generations past, and it is still engaged for their protection and deliverance. "Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" *v.* 9. And so shall it continue for ever.

It is the covenant of *Peace* which is contained in the Gospel, whose perpetuity and blessings are placed in opposition to the fading and perishing of things in this world. "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished," *v.* 6. In their supplications for Peace, they are here taught to remem-

ber, that if God's righteousness and salvation are promised to be so near to them, they need not fear the reproach of mortal men, nor be afraid of their revilings; for they are but as clouds, that darken the sun, but give no obstruction to his progress. While their perplexities and troubles are many and grievous, they are still called upon, and not less than three times in this chapter, to *hearken*, *v.* 1, 4, 7, while the Lord declares that he will "comfort them;" that "his righteousness" was "near," and "that his salvation shall be from generation to generation."

They had called on God to "awake," and put on the strength of his arm, *v.* 9; and now they are called on to awake, and help themselves, *v.* 17; to care for the things that belong to their everlasting peace, and then the cup of trembling should be taken out of their hands. Peace should then be spoken to them; and they should triumph over Satan, who had blinded and misled them. The tears which they had sown so plentifully, would result in a harvest of many consolations. They shall bear the fruits of righteousness, and "joy and gladness shall be found therein," *v.* 3.

Second Lesson, JOHN I. *v.* 29.

This chapter alludes to the morning and evening sacrifice, which typified the Lamb of God who should take away the sin of the world, Exod. xii. 3, 5; Rev. v. 6, 8. And it is the testimony of John respecting our Saviour, after he had returned from the temptation. He now appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 26. "And John bare record, saying,

I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him," *v.* 32.

That Spirit came, to qualify him for the work he had engaged to perform; descending upon him in the manner of a dove, (*a*) the emblem of meekness and gentleness; as this same Spirit afterwards descended upon the apostles. There is a repetition of the testimony of John on the next day, before his own disciples, *v.* 35, 36;—which was intended to confirm this great truth, and which occasioned two of his disciples "to follow Jesus," *v.* 37.

There is a remarkable manifestation here of the divinity of Christ, in his knowledge of Nathaniel; while, with meekness, he encourages him in the good beginning he had made. "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these," *v.* 50.

There are several subjects in this lesson, which are in accordance with the plan and design of Christ's mission, and the manner of his teaching. He was *the Lamb;* an innocent, inoffensive teacher, who had done nothing to merit the cruelty of his enemies, and seemed as ignorant of their devices, as the lamb which is led to the slaughter, Jer. xi. 19. The descent of the Spirit, infused his divine influence in bearing instruction to the hearts of those who accepted the mediatorial offer; and the character of Nathaniel, who, in the midst of the perverse Scribes and Pharisees, whose services were only an outward compliance with the Jewish ceremonies, was designated as an example of sincerity among them. "Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no

(*a*) The Spirit descended "in a bodily shape," Luke iii. 22; and, descended "like a dove," Matt. iii. 16; John i. 32.

guile!" These are incidents, which aptly convey to us the manner of Gospel instruction, commencing in the *spirit of meekness and love.*

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISAIAH LII.

Jerusalem had been described as lying in the dust; but, upon her restoration, after the Captivity, she is called upon to put on her beautiful garments. This clearly looks forward to the renovation of the Church under the Gospel, which shall be purified from all corruptions, and from the contagion of the wicked, even as the Jews should become reformed, by their captivity.

No more of the idolatrous customs, nor the affinities with other nations, should be brought in or allowed. Henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean, *v.* 1. As they had been oppressed in Egypt, so were they dispirited by the cruelty of the Babylonians, who praised their own idols, and lifted up themselves against the Lord of heaven, Dan. v. 23. The Lord is represented as vindicating his honor, for the protection of his people who were thus made to suffer; that his name should not be "continually blasphemed." Therefore, my people shall know my name: his name JEHOVAH, for by this name he was known when he delivered them out of Egypt, Exod. vi. 3.

The Gospel is proclaimed, the glad tidings, the good news, the Gospel of peace, which delivers from spiritual

bondage. And the messengers of it are hailed, when at a distance from us; and their feet are beautiful to our eyes, as they bear nearer to us those who bring the tidings of peace and salvation. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation," *v.* 7.

The prophet, to complete the deliverance, bids them march as it were in triumph out of Babylon. "Depart ye, go ye out from thence," *v.* 11. The words of the prophet extend generally beyond the deliverance from Babylon, which is but the type of a greater redemption; and the words here used are repeated in Rom. x. 15, as applicable to the Messiah. Mary sat *at his feet* to hear his word, Luke x. 39. St. Paul was brought up *at Gamaliel's feet*, Acts xxii. 3. These expressions show a submissiveness to the instruction of others; and so these feet are counted beautiful, who come eminently endowed and charged with the glad tidings of the Gospel of Peace.

Second Lesson, 1 Cor. xiii.

In the last chapter, the Corinthians were admonished that the Church is the body of Christ, that all Christians are members of his body, and, as such, are related to each other. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular," 1 Cor. xii. 27. He tells them, that as there are varieties of offices instituted by Christ, so there are gifts variously dispensed and distributed among them; and he then closes the chapter, with the remark, "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way."

In this chapter, St. Paul proceeds to show that more excellent way, and to give to charity its pre-eminence above all other gifts. It will be considered on a subsequent Sunday, (*a*) under the subject for that day. At present, it is presented to us with regard to the peace of Christ's Church. And here Charity never faileth, but is a grace permanent and perpetual, while others are of brief continuance, only shedding an influence and benefit for this world, and destined to cease with time. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." These gifts were adapted to the present imperfect state of the Church; but they can, in no wise, bear comparison with the grace of Charity, which is to endure *for ever.*

The perfection of the Church's peace will be hereafter, "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away," *v.* 10. The two stages of life; the child, and the full-grown man,—are made to illustrate the difference between the present life and that which is to come. When we arrive at manhood, the indistinct views and the prejudices of early years are put away, and reason and mature judgment are exercised, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face," *v.* 11, 12. Then, in heaven, and in perfect peace, will all shine forth in glorious splendor; and then, in perfect peace, will our hearts glow with perpetual devotion.

(*a*) Quinquagesima Sunday.

CATECHISM.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

God's universal dominion is called his kingdom. By this he preserves, protects, gives laws to and regulates all his creatures, and dispenses favors or judgments as he pleases, 1 Chron. xxix. 11; Ps. cxlv. 12. His general kingdom extends itself over all things, in heaven and earth, Ps. ciii. 19.

There is a more particular dominion which God exercises over his Church and people, *ruling in their hearts by faith*, and *guiding them by his Holy Spirit; the kingdom of God within us*, which consists in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Rom. xiv. 17. Thus God erects his throne in their hearts, gives laws and privileges to them, renders them heavenly-minded, and prepared for heaven, Matt. vi. 33; Luke xii. 31. This is the *Peace of God* which rules in his saints, and which we pray for in the Collect for this day.

Using these words in a proper spirit, we not only pray that the religion of the Gospel may be spread over the earth, but that, by the energy of God's grace in our hearts, our unruly passions may be restrained, and our sinful desires extinguished, until we unfeignedly submit to his authority, fear his displeasure, rejoice in his love, and obey his will. As he rules within us, we are prepared to pray, "thy will be done on earth;" this place of our trial and probation,—that it may be done *readily*, as angels do it in heaven, who run with cheerfulness in the ways of his commandments; *sincerely*, as they do

it, with integrity and singleness of heart; *fully* and *patiently*, by uniform and universal obedience; *unanimously*, as angels do it in heaven; for, with one heart and one voice, they sing the praises of their Maker.

This is to begin our heaven here on earth, and to do the will of God here below as it is done above, by joining with angels, in one consent and harmony of affection and devotion. This is to have the answer to our prayer, "Grant us thy peace all the days of our life."

ARTICLE XXXIV.

It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed *according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners*, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word.

Although there may sometimes be sufficient ground for ordaining new ceremonies, or for altering or abolishing those of older date, it is to be remembered, that changes in established forms are not to be made for slight causes, or without full deliberation. We are always to keep in mind the apostolical precept alluded to in the Article, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another," Rom. xiv. 19.

Private persons are bound to conform to such ceremonies, especially when they are enacted by the civil authority. It is to be considered, that the Christian religion was chiefly designed to raise and purify the nature of man, and to make human society conformable

to the divine will. Now brotherly love or charity does this, more than any other virtue whatsoever. It raises man to the likeness of God; it gives him a divine and heavenly temper within himself, and creates the tenderest union and firmest happiness possible, in all societies of men.

Our Saviour has so enlarged the obligation to it, as to make it, by the extent he has given it, "a great and new commandment," John xiii. 34, 35; xv. 12, 17. By this all the world may know and distinguish his followers from the rest of mankind. He particularly intended, that his followers should be associated in one body, and joined together in the bonds of mutual love. He appointed baptism, as the mode of receiving them into the Church; and the Eucharist, as a joint memorial that the body should keep of his death. For this end he appointed pastors, to teach and to keep together his followers; and, in his last prayer to the Father, he repeated this, that "they might be one," in several expressions. This shows, how necessary a part of religion he meant this to be, 3 John, 9, 10; 2 Thess. iii. 6; 1 Cor. xi. 16; 1 Thess. v. 14; 1 Tim. v. 20; Rom. xvi. 17, 18; 1 Cor. viii. 12.

REFLECTIONS.

We should study to cultivate mutual peace. Although we speak much of it; and ever pray for it, without following "after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another," Rom. xiv. 19; we may have but an indifferent conde-

scension to those who are weak. These are things which *make for peace*, especially in matters appertaining to the great body of the Church, in which Christians are united. The considerations under the Article which has been referred to on this day, enable us clearly to understand, that the dissolution of this union, and the doing of any thing which may extinguish the love and charity by which Christians are to be made so happy in themselves, and so useful to one another, and by which the body of Christians grows firmer and stronger, must be a sin of a very grievous nature.

Nothing can be a just reason either to prompt men to it, or to justify them in doing it, but the imposition of unlawful terms of communion; for, in that case, it is certain that "we must obey God rather than man;" that we must "seek truth and peace" together; and that the rule of "keeping a good conscience in all things," is to do it "first towards God, and then towards man." But, without such necessity, it is certainly, both in its own nature and in its consequences, one of the greatest of sins, to create disturbances in the Church, and to give occasion for all those rash censures, and unjust judgments, which arise from such divisions.

Let us remember, that meekness, humility, self-denial, and love, are the true sources of peace. We may not indeed always succeed in our endeavors to effect it; for we have to contend with many of an opposite spirit. But the God of peace will accept of our efforts to obtain it, and will surely help us to realize the truth of his Word, that "the kingdom of God is within us," Luke xvii. 21.

Grant me, Lord, to walk with thee,
In a meek simplicity;
Let not vain desires intrude,
Vain perplexities delude;
Child-like, Zionward I'd go,
Leaning on thine arm below;
In humility and love
Following thee to rest above.

In my lot of joy or care,
Thus may naught my heart ensnare;
But thy Spirit, ever near,
Draw me, guard me, guide and cheer;
Most at last, when most I need;
Till I rest, all trials o'er,
In thy presence evermore!

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany.

THE COLLECT.

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, Ps. xxv. 18; Heb. iv. 15, 16; Rom. viii. 26.

And in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth thy right hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Matt. vi. 13; Ps. lx. 5, 11; Isa. xl. 29; Ps. xxxvii. 39, 40.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

Deliverance from and Support under our Infirmities and Afflictions.

When we compare the perfect services which the law requires, with our own imperfect fulfilment of them, we may readily acknowledge, in the language of our Lit-

urgy, that we are "miserable sinners," and that "there is no health in us;" for, although we may be preserved from *wilful* sin, still must we be conscious of frequent failures in our duty to God.

Our infirmities are either *those of the body*, Lev. xii. 12; 1 Tim. v. 23; outward afflictions, reproaches, persecutions, and temptations, Heb. v. 2; 2 Cor. xii. 5, 10; or *spiritual* weakness and defects in grace, Rom. vi. 19,—failings and mistakes, committed through surprise and want of spiritual courage and strength, Rom. xv. 1. It is chiefly the latter to which the language of the Collect has reference, and upon which we pray God would look *mercifully;* for, although many of them may be ignorances they are a breaking of the perfect law of God, and are pardoned only by the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ his Son. In all humility of heart, therefore, we address ourselves to God; and we offer up our prayers, that he would strengthen us in all dangers, and necessities, through which not our own strength or wisdom, and nothing less than his Almighty power and his everlasting mercy can conduct us in safety.

Not the least among our infirmities is this: that, amid the evils and perplexities to which we are liable, the Christian loses his hold of that holy peace, which a firm faith would secure to him. This obliges him often to say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," Mark ix. 24; that is, I *believe*, but such is my infirmity of spirit, under thy chastisements, I cannot fully apply my faith. How wisely, then, are we early taught by our Christian Church, to beseech God *to look upon our infirmities mercifully;* and in every trial of our faith; *in all our dangers and necessities,—to stretch forth his right hand to help and defend us.*

THE EPISTLE.—Rom. xii. 16–21.

The whole chapter, of which this selection for the Epistle on this day is a part, contains many excellent precepts both divine and moral, to direct us in the whole course of our life. The Church has wisely selected them to be read in three several portions after the Epiphany, so that, having the *light*, we may be taught to walk in it.

The Epistle for the last week, treated of our duties towards each other, in the household of God and among *friends;* but that for this day, has reference more especially to our conduct among *enemies.* The first rule proposed to prevent injuries is, "Be not wise in your own conceits;" for nothing more inflates our pride, than an extravagant opinion of our own understanding; and nothing more disposes us to imagine wrongs which were not intended, and to resent those which have been offered to us, upon a presumed slight by those who may injure us. This excites to revenge, and an indulgence of our worst infirmities.

We here have also lessons directing our conduct, when we suffer under persecutions or wrongs of any kind. "*Recompense to no man evil for evil.*" To overcome evil with good, is to conquer other injuries by acts of mercy and kindness, and to return nothing but good for the evil that is done to us. It is the noblest of all victories; for it is "the glory of a man, to pass by an offence," and "he that ruleth his spirit" is greater "than he that taketh a city," Prov. xvi. 32. For these things we cannot propose to ourselves a higher and better pattern,

than that of our Saviour, who "himself took our *infirmities*," Matt. viii. 17; overcame the greatest evils with the greatest good, and in the end, for enduring the cross, was rewarded with a crown. And we, too, by "patient continuance in well doing," shall receive eternal life. This will be acting in the true sense of the apostolic injunction, "We then that are strong ought to bear the *infirmities* of the weak, and not to please ourselves," Rom. xv. 1.

THE GOSPEL.—St. Matt. viii. 1.

The Gospel for this day presents for our consideration two miraculous cures by our Saviour; both of them exhibiting the strongest exercise of faith.

The first is that of healing the *leper*. Leprosy was considered as the highest of all legal pollutions, Levit. xiv.; and various purifications were required, before the person who was recovered from it could be restored to all the privileges of a Jew. But no natural remedy was prescribed by Moses; deliverance from it is expressed in this case, as in other places, by *cleansing*, not by healing, because it was regarded as a judgment of God. It was deemed incurable, except by special divine interference.

The other miracle was that wrought on the servant of a Roman centurion. The centurion besought him to heal his servant, who was lying "at home sick of the *palsy*, grievously tormented." In the case of the leper, there could not have been exhibited a stronger proof of our Saviour's divine power, than the cure of this loathsome disease. According to the law, whoever touched a leper became himself unclean. But Christ, in this

proof of his power as God, showed that he was above the law, and could not be rendered unclean. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses," Matt. viii. 17; for leprosy was made the outward sign which represented sin.

The disease of the centurion's servant was of such a nature as to debilitate the body, and weaken the mind; but his master, with great humility and faith, relied on Christ's power to heal him at a distance. "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

These are instances which show, that there is no situation in life, no occupation, no profession, however unfavorable it may appear to the cultivation of religion, which prevents us from acquiring those good dispositions and Christian virtues which the Gospel requires. They show us, that our compassionate Saviour, who was so ready to relieve the bodily ailments of those who came to him, will tenderly regard our spiritual necessities. "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our *infirmities*," Heb. iv. 15.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISAIAH LIV.

Jerusalem had been, during the captivity, in the condition of a childless wife, or a desolate solitary widow, xlix. 21; lxii. 4. Here the prophet bids her to rejoice, and comfort herself after her affliction, because not only should the ruins of Jerusalem be repaired, but the suburbs of it should be extended on all sides; and her

children should be more numerous than they were in her most flourishing condition. God will again be a husband to her; and the reproach of his people's captivity, and the small number to which they were then reduced, shall be forgotten. "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations," *v.* 2. "For thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is his name," *v.* 5.

These words are understood of Jerusalem, as she was a type of the Christian Church, according to St. Paul's exposition of that text, Gal. iv. 27. In this sense, the words import, that the Church, after her spouse Jesus Christ was taken from her by death, was left disconsolate, with orphan children, John xiv. 18;—and comfortless. But, from that depressed condition she was to arise,—to spread over the world, and to receive enlargement when the fulness of the Gentiles should come in. The favor and affection God will show his people, will make them forget all their former disgrace and affliction. "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded," *v.* 4. God's anger towards his servants is short, when compared with that everlasting kindness he will show to them, *v.* 7. And although their enemies should make attempts against them, they shall not receive his assistance. "Whosoever shall gather together against thee, shall fall for thy sake," *v.* 15. God will protect and maintain their innocence, against all the malice of their enemies. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn," *v.* 17.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, MATT. IV. *v.* 12.

This lesson begins with an account of the imprisonment of John the Baptist. He had represented himself as only the harbinger of Christ, who now, when he hears of the afflictions of the saint, "that John was cast into prison," commenced his own ministry, by preaching and working miracles.

John had declared, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," Matt. iii. *v.* 2; and had urged the necessity of national and personal repentance. Now, Christ confirms that doctrine. His preaching is on the subject, and in the identical words which John had preached, *v.* 17. Several of his disciples are now called; and the miracles which he wrought are here given. He healed paralytics, lunatics, and those possessed with devils. Such diseases defied the medical art; they were distressing to the body, and peculiarly affected the mind.

Jesus went about "preaching the Gospel of the kingdom;" "and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them," *v.* 23, 24. These miracles were wrought, almost without exception, for the relief of human misery, but never for his own relief. He fed the hungry, and he healed "all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people," *v.* 23.

Such miracles were evidences of his *divinity;* and, unlike those performed by Moses, which indicated the

terrors of the law, they were wrought to show the mercy and beneficence of the Gospel dispensation, and were intended to lead men to repentance. The diseases which Christ healed, were emblematical of sin, the greatest of all maladies; and such miracles may have their spiritual application, showing how he will extend his mercy to the relief of our *infirmities*, and for our conversion and sanctification.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, Isa. lv.

This chapter was intended for the comfort of the captives at Babylon and of the other dispersed people of Israel. It may be considered also as the Gospel which is preached to us, and which is contained more fully and clearly in the New Testament. The free offers of grace are here published by the prophet; and men are exhorted not to reject them, but to turn to God with a sincere repentance, who will graciously pardon and accept them. "Come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price," *v.* 1; purchased by Christ at no less a price than *his own blood*, 1 Pet. i. 19, and now offered upon the Gospel terms, repentance and reformation.

These terms are set forth with simplicity and plainness, in the words, "Let the wicked forsake *his way*, and the unrighteous man his *thoughts:* and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him," *v.* 7. When the Jews return from their captivity, "they shall go out with joy," *v.* 12. And this call from Babylon is the type of a more glorious deliverance; when God will

call men, by the Gospel, "out of darkness into his marvellous light." The accomplishment of the prediction would be an earnest of a greater deliverance, when men would feel the effects of Gospel grace upon their characters. Virtue and holiness shall spring up, instead of vice and wickedness; instead of the Church's enemies, there should be those who would be her protection and ornament. Those that were as thorns and briers, should be as trees that are for use and beauty; and there should be an everlasting monument, or memorial, of the goodness of the Lord. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that should not be cut off," *v.* 13.

Second Lesson, 2 Cor. iv.

St. Paul here declares the sincerity, faithfulness, and triumphs of himself and his brethren. He had, in the last chapter, commended the ministry of the Gospel, in preference to the Law; and he now explains how they believed and prized the office of the ministry of the Gospel, exercising their constancy and perseverance in the work. "Seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;" but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, *v.* 1, 2. They acted disinterestedly; they did not preach themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; because, by Gospel light, they had the knowledge of the glory of God; and because they were but weak and frail creatures, subject to like passions and infirmities as other men, and therefore always in want of that light which the apostle terms *a treasure.*

"But we have this *treasure* in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us," *v.* 7. This figure may have been derived from the incident related in Judges, vii. 16, where the soldiers of Gideon had their lamps in empty pitchers, which so effectually served them in their conquest of the Midianites. Although weak and frail vessels, and easily broken, the *treasures* they contained constituted their chief value, and supported them under their conflicts. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed, *v.* 8, 9. This encouraged them in their work; for, if the outward man should perish, the inward man,—that *treasure* to which he referred,—was "renewed day by day," *v.* 16. As their affliction increased, so were they relieved by an active faith in the promise of heavenly glory. They were constantly looking far beyond the things of this world; because "the things which are not seen are eternal," 2 Cor. iv. 18. This enabled them to weigh the advantages of their sufferings with the joys of eternity. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," *v.* 17.

CATECHISM.

"Know this; that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the Commandments of God, and to serve him, without his special grace."

The Catechumen is here instructed: 1. As to his inability of himself to keep God's commandments; for the apostle tells us, that we are not "sufficient of ourselves

to think anything as of ourselves," 2 Cor. iii. 5. And, certainly, if we cannot think a good thought, we are more unable to do a good action; and, as we cannot by our strength perform a good deed, so neither can we keep the whole law.—2. The Catechumen is instructed, as to the necessity of God's grace, to assist him in the performance of it. This inability to walk in God's commandments, *without his special grace*, arose partly from the original corruption and depravity of our nature, contracted by the fall of our first parents, and partly from the evil suggestions and temptations of our spiritual enemies. This corruption, so contracted from our first parents, is the cause of all sin and wickedness, in all the sons of men; although man, in his first estate, was able to keep the whole law, and had strength enough to do all that was required of him.—3. The Catechumen is instructed, that we cannot *walk in the commandments of God, or serve him, without his special grace*, which implies, that although we cannot do these things without divine grace, yet with the assistance of that, we can do them; for then our own sufficiency is of God, 2 Cor. iii. 5.

Scripture, reason, and experience, satisfy us of this. "My grace is sufficient for thee," 2 Cor. xii. 9; ix. 8. There are also examples in Scripture, of those who served God acceptably, and walked before him in his commandments. *Enoch* "had this testimony, that he pleased God," Heb. xi. 5;—David "walked, in integrity of heart," before God, 1 Kings ix. 4;—and Zacharias and Elizabeth are said to have walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, Luke i. 6. To this we may add our own experience, when we exert the power God has given us, and do not turn away from his instruction.

This sufficiency is partly *natural*, whereby we are enabled to know our duty, and in some measure to observe and practise it, or to discern between good and evil, with a will to choose the one and refuse the other. It is partly also *spiritual*. We are supplied with supernatural aids and assistances of the Holy Spirit, to renew our minds, and reform our corrupt inclinations. This spiritual or supernatural aid, is that which in Scripture is often styled grace; and here, in the Catechism, it is called *special grace*, which aids and concurs with our natural powers, shows them their way, and helps them when they are *faint*. This is the Spirit's helping our *infirmities*. Rom. viii. 26; John xv. 5; Rom. vii. 18; 1 Cor. xv. 10; 2 Cor. iii. 5; xii. 9; Eph. iii. 16; Phil. ii. 13.

ARTICLE IX.

And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in Greek *φρόνημα σαρκός*, (which some do expound wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire, of the flesh,) is not subject to the Law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized; yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin.

Although there are no such words as *original sin* to be found in the Scriptures, yet it exists in our hearts, as our own experience proves. In this Article it is shown, that it does not consist in the following of Adam; that is, in the bare imitation of our first parents, as the Pelagians held. It is the fault and corruption of man's nature; for Adam, by corrupting himself, corrupted his whole posterity.

In Scripture, this general corruption of our nature is often mentioned. The imagination of man's thoughts was "only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21. "There is no man that sinneth not," 1 Kings viii. 46; and so in various other parts of Scripture, Prov. xxiv. 16; Jer. xvii. 9; 2 Cor. v. 17; Eccl. vii. 29; Gal. v. 17; 1 John v. 19; Eph. iv. 18; Matt. xv. 19. Although there shall be no condemnation to him that believeth and is baptized, yet there are corruptions in him here. (*a*)

The sum of all is, that Adam's sin is imputed to us; and we are infected with it, not only before but after we are born again,—while we are in this life. *And this infection of nature doth remain.* Great controversies have arisen respecting what has been written by St. Paul in Rom. vii, which is understood to have reference to this subject. The Apostle describes the contest that he felt within himself. Whether this chapter is to be construed as of the state in which he represents himself while yet a Jew, and before his conversion, or in his converted and regenerated state, is a disputed question. There are many texts which manifestly express the struggles which a good man has to endure. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," Matt. xxvi. 14. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh," Gal. v. 17; Rom. viii. 13.

To this purpose also St. Augustine has written, "So long as thou livest here, sin will necessarily be in thy members; but, howsoever, let the dominion of it be taken away, let it not be obeyed in what it commands. Is all iniquity blotted out in baptism? Doth no infirmity remain? If no infirmity remained, we might live without sin. But *who* can say this, unless unworthy of

(*a*) See Article XVI.

the mercy of the Redeemer?" The same appears from texts already cited, to prove that concupiscence and lust hath of itself "the nature of sin," that is, of *infirmity.* Except it hath the consent of the will, it cannot be a wilful sin; nor will it be imputed to such as are regenerated, nor bring them into condemnation. See Art. X. and Art. XVI.

REFLECTIONS.

The instruction which we are to derive from the exercises of this day, is this: "Our sufficiency is of God;" in all our dangers and necessities we are to look to him to save and defend us. And as the sense of our own weakness should keep us from all presumption, and from trusting to our own strength, so the sense of the sufficiency we have from God may keep us from despondency, and may check all distrust of his grace and goodness.

Although we are unable of ourselves to do any thing good, yet his grace, we see, is sufficient for us. And this is never wanting to our sincere endeavors. God is more ready to give, than we are to ask it of him, Acts xx. 35. This consideration may serve to check the assumption of merit, and to teach us to ascribe all that we are, and have, or can do, to the divine bounty. If all *our sufficiency is of God*, then it is not of ourselves; and, consequently, we can have nothing to boast of, except our *infirmities*, which rather need pity, than deserve a reward.

To merit any thing at God's hands, we must give something which is our own. Yet we have nothing but

what we receive from him. We are indebted to him for our very being; and we daily depend upon his bounty. If all our sufficiency is of God, we should thankfully own and employ what we have, in his service. This is the way to procure a blessing upon what we have already, and to obtain more. He that used his talents to his master's honor, was commended, and rewarded with a large share; but he that neglected or misemployed them, forfeited all, and was with shame deprived of all. This should teach us to be careful, not to misspend our time, wealth, or strength, in the service of sin; not to abuse the gifts of God, but rather study to employ them to his glory. So, at last, they shall be multiplied upon us, and promote our good. Let us use that natural power and strength which we have already, in keeping God's commandments, and then we shall not fail of having his grace to assist our infirmities. "The Lord will give grace and glory: and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,"—Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God," Ps. lxxi. 16.

Were salvation's hope suspended
Save on the Almighty-arm;
All *that* hope with me were ended;
Nought could still my heart's alarm.
Such a world of guilt distresses,
Such an infinite of sin,
Such an evil nature presses;
Helpless, hopeless, all within.

But the Saviour's boundless merit
Can my boundless guilt efface;
But his heart-renewing Spirit,
Ne'er withholds his trusted grace.

On I'll go, in meek reliance,
  Saviour, on that work of thine;
Onward, bidding foes defiance,
  Spirit, in thy might divine!

Oh, to me the matchless favor
  Of Nathaniel's guileless heart,
Whole devoted to his Saviour,—
  Lord of heavenly gifts impart!
Child-like be my faith, and simple,
  Easy, cheerful, strong, complete;
From each idol purge thy temple,
  For thy Spirit's dwelling meet.

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany.

THE COLLECT.

O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, 1 Pet. v. 8; 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2; iii. 17.

That by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright, Matt. xxvi. 41; Gal. v. 17; Mark xiv. 29, 30, 66 to 72.

Grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Deut. xxxiii. 25; 1 Cor. x. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 9; Isa. xl. 29, 31; 2 Pet. ii. 9; Ps. xxxiv. 17, 18, 19.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

Deliverance from and Support in Dangers and Temptations, Temporal and Spiritual.

In this Collect are renewed, the confession of weakness, and the strain of supplication for strength, which

were offered in that of the last Sunday. God knows, that we are set in the midst of many and great dangers; and yet he does not remove us from them, but guards us from their evil influence. It is this consideration that supports the Christian, in the deepest distress, and under the most powerful temptations. He is not dismayed in the hour of danger, because he knows that thereunto he is called; and that God will grant him strength and protection. Nor is he surprised by temptation to evil; for he knows it to be the divine will, that he should for a season continue in a world which is full of temptation; and he believes, that God is able and willing to give him strength to resist and ultimately to overcome it. Our blessed Saviour was proclaimed, at his Advent, the Prince of *Peace;* but his disciples did not enter upon a peaceful course: they were subject to temporal and spiritual trials. In the beautiful and affecting prayer which Christ offered for them, before he was removed from earth to heaven, he distinctly impressed upon their minds, that the life of his followers was to be a constant struggle against evil. For this reason, they were not to withdraw themselves from the world, but to live in it, to the glory of their God, and the well-being of their fellow-creatures. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil," John xvii. 15. Now, then, to live amidst the dangers and temptations of the world, yet free from the evil of it, is so manifestly not in our own power, and is so far beyond our own strength, that the Church, in the several parts of her liturgy, continually refers to the necessity of our obtaining God's gracious support and protection, to help our

infirmities, and to supply that strength which alone can enable us to resist evil, but which we cannot ourselves supply.

THE EPISTLE.—Rom. xiii. 1.

The Epistle directs us to the great duty of subjection to our superiors, as the proper means of procuring their protection, and of preventing the many and great evils and dangers of resistance. On the last Sunday, the Epistle spoke of our conduct as individuals; to-day, it falls in with a more enlarged view of Christ's manifestation. It speaks of the persons ordained of God, or the governments of the world, and inculcates the duty of obedience on our part, for conscience sake. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." "For there is no power but of God," Rom. xiii. 1.

The design of government is to restrain from vice, and to encourage and support virtue. They who behave in an orderly manner, have no cause for fear. Beneficial consequences are to be expected by them, from the institution and exercise of such authority; for the magistrate is appointed by God, for their defence and security. From the several duties obliging all Christians, merely as such, enjoined in the twelfth chapter of this epistle, for the three last Sundays, St. Paul here proceeds to those which are political; binding on them as members of a civil body.

The circumstances of the Church required St. Paul to write on this subject. The Jews had an opinion, that they, as the peculiar people of God, could not be bound in conscience to obey any foreign jurisdiction, exercised

by heathens and idolaters, such as the Romans were. Most of those who embraced the Gospel had been educated in the Jewish faith; and they cherished a veneration for their former principles, even in matters immediately concerning Christian faith and worship. It was found difficult to draw them from their predilections and prejudices. Hence the Apostle here states the nature of the duty of obedience to governors, and its obligation, not merely on the ground of secular convenience, but as a part of religion, binding the conscience. The advice here given is nevertheless applicable at this day; for, although religion has now the countenance and support of the laws, it does not undertake to model Governments, by any fixed standard. It leaves the people to consult their safety and convenience, by laws and regulations which they may consider as most salutary. It does not teach men to establish governments, but to obey them. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," 1 Pet. ii. 13.

THE GOSPEL.—St. Matt. viii. 23–34.

In the Gospel for last week, our Lord appears manifesting himself to single persons; to-day, he is seen as God, commanding the powers of nature, the winds and the waves, and afterwards those still more vast powers of the unseen world, evil spirits possessing a herd of more than two thousand swine and hurrying them to destruction. The agreement between the Epistle and the Gospel, to-day, is remarkable.

When we refer to the incidents mentioned in the Gospel, it is generally on the subject of national or

popular commotions. We unite them as the Psalmist does, when he says, "which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people," Ps. lxv. 7. Such an army of spirits entering into a multitude of animals, by divine permission, may well remind us of nations influenced, as they sometimes are, by violent impulses and evil passions, setting forth the like figure.

There is wholesome instruction in these two incidents. It may have been the design of Providence, by the terrors of the storm, to exercise those disciples in patience and devout confidence, under the most alarming dangers to them. The office of establishing the Gospel, committed to them, was to be fulfilled in despite of indignities, reproaches, and persecutions. It was fit, then, to lead them, from an early period of their severe service, to practise a firm faith in the midst of worldly danger. The highest excellence of the Christian character is to be arrived at, by passing through sufferings. Hence we call afflictions *trials;* for they are the *test* of virtue.

The other miracle presents an instructive instance of the power of Christ over evil spirits, and of his ability to save us from their influence; and the narrative shows, that even the devils acknowledged, that he was "the Son of God," and that they were subject to his authority. They who wallow, as those dumb creatures, in the mire of sensuality, are, though ignorant of it, subjecting themselves to the temptations of the evil one, and are far gone on their way to ruin. Through the Saviour's divine grace, we may be preserved from the dreadful dominion which Satan would exercise over us by our evil passions, and from the present trouble and the eternal misery which would attend his dominion.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISA. LVII.

In the preceding chapter, the prophet exhorted the Jews, and the proselytes who were joined to them, to prepare their minds and render themselves fit objects of God's mercy, by observing the Sabbath, and to keep their hands from doing evil; that "the sons of the stranger" should be accepted, thereby preparing a way for the Gospel institution, when the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles should be broken down. In the close of the chapter, he condemned their watchmen for their ignorance and sottishness, and now, in this chapter, he reproves them for their insensibility to the removal of good princes, such as Hezekiah and Josiah, who might either by their prayers avert impending judgments, or by their prudence and vigilance apply proper remedies for the public calamities. Merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come, *v.* 1.

The "sons of the sorceress," and "seed of the adulterer," are summoned, to hear the charge against them for their disobedience, scoffing, and idolatry. Yet God had compassion upon the work of his hands, "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth," *v.* 16. Having "seen his ways," (a reformation,) "I will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners," *v.* 18. There is comfort to those who are willing to acknowledge, that *by reason of their frailty*, they cannot always *stand upright.* "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is

near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him," *v.* 19. But the wicked cannot hope to enjoy either peace of mind or outward prosperity. Their inward guilt gives them continual disquiet, "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest," *v.* 20. When man ceases to act frowardly, and humbles himself, he may expect strength and protection. While he perseveres in rebellion, he can have no ground to hope for mercy; but when, as a sinner, he falls down at the footstool of the throne of grace, God will no more contend with him, lest "the spirit" of man should fail before him, *v.* 16; Psalm lxxviii. 38, 39; ciii. 9, 13, 14.

Second Lesson, LUKE IV. 14 *to* 33.

Christ returned, *v.* 14, from his defeat of Satan in the several *temptations* by which he had been assailed, using, in each case, the sword of the Spirit, which is "the word of God," Eph. vi. 17. He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and having entered into the synagogue, he read out of the prophecies of Esaias, and announced his commission: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised," *v.* 18.

This was the fulfilment of the prophecy in the first lesson for the next Sunday, Isa. lxi. 1. He was to preach the Gospel to the poor; to preach it to the humble, or the poor in spirit, Matt. v. 3, to whom the Gospel was preached with the best success, they being best fitted and most ready to receive it. "To heal the

broken-hearted," that is, those who are pierced in heart, who *know they are set in the midst of many and great dangers*, and are contrite in spirit, so as to repent, and turn from their sins, Isa. lvii. 15. "To preach deliverance to the captives," that is, to the Jews in bondage to the law, Gal. iv. 9; to both Jew and Gentile, under captivity to the law of sin, Rom. vii. 23. Recovery of sight to the blind (*a*) Jews and Pharisees, who had eyes and saw not, John ix. 40, 41; and to the blind Gentiles, Rom. xi. 8. To "set at liberty" those who were bruised with the chain of their sins.

The Jews who were his hearers, expected that his miracles would be performed in his own country, and to the advantage of his own people. This occasioned his address to them, "Ye will surely say to me, Physician, heal thyself," as one of that profession would minister first to his own family; and though they were pleased with his gracious words, our Saviour perceived their exclusive feelings, and he gives them the Scripture instances of the widow of Sarepta, and of Naaman, the Syrian, to satisfy them that the mercies of God through him were dispensed freely, and to all; so that Gentiles as well as Jews might claim the benefit of deliverance from all dangers and temptations. His miracles, therefore, which extended alike to the cure of bodily ailments and to the forgiveness of sins, were wrought according to the appointment of God himself.

(*a*) Τυφλῶν: "The blind" and "them that sit in darkness," is a periphrasis of the Gentiles, Isa. ix. 11; xlii. 6, 7; xlix. 9; Luke i. 79; Eph. v. 8.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, Isa. lix.

From the beginning of this chapter, it appears, that the Jews had deemed God's power not sufficient to deliver them from their enemies, as he had done in times past. The prophet proclaims that their own iniquities were the cause of God's withholding his mercies, and of his sending judgments upon them. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that he cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God," *v.* 1, 2. They who sought deliverance, had provoked the Almighty to hide his face, thus teaching them, that while they regarded iniquity in their hearts he would not hear their prayers, Ps. lxvi. 18.

The nature of these sins is shown, as not only evil in itself, but as gendering iniquity. "They hatch cocatrice's eggs," *v.* 5. Poisonous in themselves, their sins propagate that which is poisonous. The people appear to be self-convicted, and to acknowledge that God was justified in what he had declared and done. "Therefore, is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us," *v.* 9; for our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us, *v.* 12. Notwithstanding these provocations, salvation was determined for them, that is, temporarily, to release them from their Babylonish bondage, by "his arm" which should bring salvation, *v.* 16.

And this should be typical of their greater deliverance. "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto

them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord," *v.* 20. This must be understood of Christ, the great Prophet and Oracle of the Church, who came from heaven to declare unto us the whole counsel of God, and whom we are to hear and obey in all things, li. 16; lxi. 1. The words contain a promise to the Church,—his spiritual children, viii. 18,—of being guided by God's Spirit into all truth, and that his Spirit shall continue with them for ever, Col. i. 1–11, to *support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations.* This promise shall receive its completion, when God's people shall all be righteous. "They shall be all taught of him," John vi. 45.

Second Lesson, 2 Cor. v.

A deep sense of "the frailty of our nature," the weak and unstable foundation of our "earthly tabernacle," is here blended with considerations why we should still "*stand upright*," and not faint under any apprehensions of *danger or temptations.* The apostle points to the prospect of happiness which we are to enjoy, in the everlasting habitations which God has prepared for them that love him. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," *v.* 1. We therefore "groan" in this body, as a heavy burthen. And under the pressure of all the troubles of this life, we earnestly desire to be clothed upon with immortality.

The Corinthians are comforted by the apostle, under all their calamities, with the assurance, that while they

are "at home in the body," they are "absent from the Lord;" not present with him now, because "we walk by faith, not by sight," *v.* 7, and therefore "labor" to be "accepted of him." As an inducement to this labor or exertion, they are reminded of a future judgment, where we must all appear; and as Christ died for *all* who would otherwise have been eternally miserable, they should therefore consecrate themselves to him as the great motive or object of their existence in this world. Wherefore "henceforth know we no man after the flesh," *v.* 16.

St. Paul thence describes the necessity of the *new birth*, because "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," *v.* 17. Last of all, he exhorts the Corinthians to become reconciled to God; and, having the ministry of reconciliation, to accept the offers made to them by the Apostles, as ambassadors of God. These offers, made in view of the *frailty of our nature*, will support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God," *v.* 20.

CATECHISM.

"Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."

Temptation signifies any kind of trial or probation. It sometimes means the trial of a man's virtue or constancy; and that is either by some difficult act of obedience, as when God tempted Abraham to sacrifice his son, Gen. xxii. 1; or some great suffering and affliction, as in the case of Job. Both of these are styled in Scrip-

ture *temptations*, because by them the temper, dispositions, and intentions of men, are discovered, and their virtues exercised and improved. Sometimes, temptation means entering or drawing men into sin; and this is done by fear, troubles, and persecutions, or by allurements and solicitations to evil. Satan is styled the Tempter; and the pleasures and honors of the world are temptations.

God is said to lead us into temptation, when he lays any trouble or calamity upon us himself, or permits others to afflict us. Thus, he tempted Job, by laying his hand upon him, and suffering the Chaldeans and Sabeans to despoil him of all his goods; and he leads us out of temptation, when he removes afflictions from us, 1 Cor. x. 13. But God cannot lead any one into temptation by enticement or solicitation to evil, for that would make him the author of sin, of which he has declared himself the avenger, James i. 13. When we pray, "lead us not into temptation," we are not directed to pray against all trials by affliction and adversity; for these are sometimes more beneficial to us than prosperity, 2 Cor. iv. 17; James i. 2. But we are to pray against all enticements to sin, which is the bane of peace, and the ruin of the body and the soul.

The other branch of the petition, *Deliver us from evil*, is only an illustration and enforcement of the preceding. In the original, it is from *the evil one*, which Chrysostom interprets *the devil*, frequently called the Tempter, from whose duress we pray to be delivered. As for temporal evils, such as sickness, losses, disappointments in worldly affairs, evil reports, and reproaches, we are to deprecate them, as our Saviour did the bitter cup, with submission to the divine will. We are to say, as he said, "O my

Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," Matt. xxvi. 39. Nevertheless, because our bitter cup may sometimes be necessary, for God's glory and our good, we are to add with him, "Not my will, but thine, be done," Luke xxii. 42.

God is said to tempt, Gen. xxii. 1; James i. 2, 3; 1 Peter, i. 6, 7; Rom. v. 3, 4. Men are said to tempt God, Ps. xcv. 8, 9; Exod. xvii. 1, 7; Deut. vi. 16. Temptations of the devil, Matt. iv. 31; 1 Thess. iii. 5; James i. 13, 14.

ARTICLE X.

The condition of Man after the fall of *Adam* is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

Ever since man first fell from holiness, he has had no ability to raise himself from sin. Although at his fall he did not entirely lose the freedom of his will,—for he is still a reasonable creature,—he ceased to be free with relation to good, and he became the servant of sin. Thence proceeds such a blindness of his understanding, such a perverseness of his will, such violence of his passions and appetites, that, when left to himself, he is not able to discern or to choose those things which are truly good, but is hurried into a preference of evil things. Thus our Saviour says, Without me ye can do nothing, John xv. 5. And the Apostle says, "They that are in

the flesh cannot please God, Rom. viii. 8; 1 Cor. ii. 14; John vi. 44; 1 Cor. xii. 31.

This Article speaks of both an assisting and a preventing grace. David's prayers every where relate to something internal. He prays to God to "open" and turn his "eyes," Psalm cxix. 18, 37; to incline his heart; and to quicken him, Ps. li. 10, 11; Prov. ii. 6; iii. 6, 34. In the promise which Jeremiah gives of a new covenant, this is the character of it, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts," Jer. xxxi. 33, 34; and Ezekiel says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you," Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

That these prophecies relate to the new dispensation, cannot be questioned. In our Saviour's discourse concerning the Spirit, Luke xi. 13, although he refers to the extraordinary effusion at Pentecost, and to the effects that would follow, there are many parts of the discourse that relate to the constant necessities of all Christians. St. Peter prays, in his Epistle to the dispersed Christians, that God would make them "perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle" them, 1 Pet. v. 10; and so also does St. Paul, in words and phrases which import inward assistance. This is meant by Christ's living and dwelling in us, 2 Cor. vi. 16; and by our being "rooted and grounded" in him, Eph. iii. 17. These and many other passages of the New Testament place it beyond doubt, that there are inward communications from God to the powers of our souls, by which we are made both to apprehend the truths of religion, and to remember and reflect on them, as the means whereby we may be supported in all dangers and carried through all temptations.

See Articles for the third Sunday after the Epiphany.

REFLECTIONS.

The consideration that we are to be delivered from the evil of the world, according to the prayer of our Saviour, John xvii. 15, supports the Christian in his deepest distress, and under his most powerful temptations. He is not dismayed in the hour of danger, because he knows that thereunto he is called, and that God will grant him *strength and protection.* Neither is he surprised by allurements to evil; because he knows it to be the divine ordinance that he should, for a season, continue in a world which is full of temptation. He believes, that God is able and willing to give him strength to resist and ultimately overcome it.

God has no where engaged to keep off assaults and temptations. He has given us encouragement enough to trust, that he will sustain and succor us, and, in his own time, will deliver us from danger and distress. When therefore these attack us, we are to seek his protection, by earnest and constant prayer, and thus to silence all those wicked distrusts, into which our frail nature, the prevalence of sensual affections, and extreme afflictions and troubles are apt to betray us. We are to remember, that, though we ourselves are weak, our Redeemer is mighty; that the stormy wind, which cannot rise but at his word, shall, when he pleases to command, be immediately followed by a great calm.

How greatly would the happiness of man, in this world as well as in the next be promoted, by a universal obedience, according to the doctrine of St. Paul in this day's Epistle. What vast benefits would result, did

governors always seek the best interests of those under their authority; and did those who are under authority obey, *for conscience sake*, as *unto God*. What peace and order, what unity and contentment, would thus be produced! Most true is it, with respect to the public and civil capacities of men, as well as to their conduct, individually, that "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8.

STILLING THE TEMPEST.

Lord, thou didst arise and say
  To the troubled waters, "Peace!"
And the tempest died away.
  Down they sank, the foaming seas;
And a calm and heavenly sleep
Spread o'er all the glassy deep;
All the azure lake serene
Like another heaven was seen!

Lord, thy gracious word repeat
  To the billows of the proud!
Quell the tyrant's martial heat,
  Quell the fierce and changing crowd!
Then the earth shall find repose
From its restless strife and woes;
And an imaged heaven appear
On our world of darkness here.

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany.

THE COLLECT.

O Lord, we beseech thee to keep thy Church and household continually in thy true religion, Isa. xxvii. 3; Eph. v. 25; Heb. xiii. 9; Ezek. xxxvi. 27; Phil. i. 6.

That they who do lean only upon the hope of thy heavenly grace, Prov. iii. 5; 1 Pet. v. 7; Ps. xvii. 7; xvi. 8, 91; Joel iii. 16.

May evermore be defended by thy mighty power; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. John xvii. 15; 1 John iv. 4; Isa. xxvi. 1, 4.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

The Universal Church; True Religion, under God's PROTECTING Power.

Our liturgy has, with pious wisdom, so imbodied all the doctrines of the Gospel, that, from the appropriate place assigned to each, they have severally, from their very order of place, the greater weight and influence. If we are taught to pray for divine aid, as our only ground of safety in the way of holiness, we are also instructed, that even the Spirit of God is received in vain, and is indeed grieved, Eph. iv. 30, unless he finds the soul earnestly desirous to co-operate in working out its own salvation.

In the preceding Collects, we lamented our weakness and folly; and we confessed that we have of ourselves no strength to help ourselves, and that we trust to God for strength. We pray, in the present Collect, that,

whilst we depend on God, we may not be wanting to ourselves; whilst we lean upon another support, we may not render that support vain, by want of exertion on our part. The Spirit of God is to lead; but we must follow. If, when his directing influence is vouchsafed, we are inactive, we cannot reasonably expect to advance in our Christian course. Our blessed Saviour has left us his own example, to instruct and encourage us in the way of godliness. *He "leaned only upon God's heavenly grace;"* yet, when so supported, he was not himself listless or inactive. When he began the work of feeding the hungry by miracles, his dependence was upon God; and therefore to God he made his prayer for blessing. Throughout his temptation in the wilderness, and during his agony in the garden, and his trial on the cross, God was his refuge and support. But he did not so lean upon heavenly aid, as to neglect exertion on his own part. Every energy of his soul was awakened; every faculty was roused into action. By a life of benevolent activity, and by a voluntary death, the perfection of benevolence, he worked the work of him who sent him.

THE EPISTLE.—Col. iii. 12.

In the Collect for this week, we pray God to keep *his Church and household continually in his true religion;* and the Epistle consists of a beautiful exhortation to the practice of all Gospel graces that they may abound more and more, in love. This love which the Epistle inculcates, is indeed the remedy, the safeguard, and the light, in our troubles. Nothing can be right without it; and nothing can be very wrong, while this love con-

tinues. We are exhorted to love God and our neighbor. with humility: and this may be regarded as the bes counsel that can be given in times of religious doubt, d darkness and difficulty, such as now accompanies the great Epiphany.

But this love is endangered; and the heavenly torch burns dimly, on account of the prevailing corruption. This corruption is a snare amid false doctrine and dissensions in the Church. We ought to hate what is evil, and contend against it; but there is danger, lest hatred and contention sour the heart and stifle charity. At such times, our souls should be attuned to heavenly harmonies, as by the short Epistle for this day. Nothing can be more conducive to win others, and to keep us in the path of truth. "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped;" and why? Ps. lxxiii. 2, because he beheld the manifold prosperities of evil; but when "I went into the *sanctuary* of God;" then all was clear, and the stumbling feet were strengthened. "Put on" "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts," "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," Col. iii. 12, 13, 15, 16. Whatever is felt strongly in the heart, seeks expression in melody and song; and if Christ indeed dwell in the heart, in all richness of wisdom, then such songs will, like streams from the fountains of God's love, refresh, enliven, and fertilize all around, and make charity and thanksgiving abound to God's glory. It is to his glory that we thus sing; yet we cannot do this, without benefitting others with our

sacred service. Thankful love is like the flower which cannot open its breast to heaven, without diffusing its incense.

THE GOSPEL.—St. Matt. xiii. 24.

The Gospel for this day furnishes us with our Lord's account of what is to be expected in the world, during the spread of his Gospel, very different from a state of truth and charity. It is of *his household the Church* not continuing in true religion; of heresies and iniquities abounding. Love, like that which binds together one family, will not be found.

But, the combination of the affectionate appeals of the Epistle, taken together with the sad prophecies of the Gospel, are in the highest degree edifying, and furnish a lesson, most needful and seasonable to us at this time; for the faith of some is weakened. That Christian charity which the Epistle describes, waxes colder in others, by observing this state of Christ's Church, which is in fact only what the Gospel predicted.

The purport of the parable, represents the present and future state of the kingdom of heaven, the visible Church. Over this Christ rules, as the kingdom of heaven upon earth.

On the four preceding Sundays, Christ's glory has been manifested to us, by *miracles* which he wrought while he conversed with us on earth. The Gospel for this day refers, figuratively, to the *final judgment*, as a *harvest*. When "the good seed" was sown in the field, from the highest doctrine to the lowest duty all was

"one Lord, one faith, one baptism." But, "while men slept," when they became careless in the faith, sleeping over the things of eternity, the "enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way." The tares were not seen, till the fruit was "brought forth." *Let them alone*, was our Lord's command, in speaking of false and pernicious teachers, "let both grow together until *the harvest*;" and then "gather ye together first the tares," and "burn them:" but "gather the wheat into my barn." Good and evil may grow together, but in due time they are to be set asunder for ever. We see, in our day, that not the goodly grain only but noisome weeds are fast ripening. Therefore we know that the time draws near, for the Lord of the harvest to discern the existing state of things, which the Gospel declares is a wonderful Epiphany,—a great manifestation of the truth of the divine Word. And this points forward to that other manifestation, when the mixture of good and bad in the Gospel Church are to be separated at the Judgment-day.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISAIAH LI.

Christ is introduced declaring his commission, full of grace and comfort to his Church, with particular promises to the Jewish Church to receive her with favor again, after she had been a long time rejected and forsaken. In the opening of this chapter, the Jews are considered as living stones, dug out of the rock of human nature, and from the *quarry* of the Chaldees. "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit

whence ye are digged," *v.* 1. The object of referring them to their humble origin, is to remind them that they, like their earthly ancestors, were barren as the rock itself, and indebted to the great God their Creator, for all they possessed.

Here is comfort and consolation to those who "follow after righteousness," with confidence in the fulfilment of God's promise of future blessings, especially under the dispensation of the Messiah: God will preserve his Church. The Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord, *v.* 3. They are directed to turn their eyes to other nations which, under this righteousness and salvation, were to be admitted to partake of the same redemption. "The isles,"—the Gentiles,—"shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust," *v.* 5. The perpetuity of the Gospel and its accompanying blessings are illustrated by the changeable and transitory nature of things in this world. "For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation," *v.* 8.

The faithful shall then with exultation lift up their voices, and recall the wondrous works of Almighty God in times past, encouraging them to look now for the like glorious display of his power and goodness. "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days," *v.* 9. God the Creator will undertake to deliver and comfort his people; and although the condition of the *Church* was desolate, although Jerusalem had "drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of

his fury," *v.* 17, her trouble should cease, and be visited upon those who had afflicted her, *v.* 23.

A promise is implied in this chapter, that there shall be a new state of things, called a new heaven and a new earth, lxv. 17; lxvi. 22; wherein Christ will reward his saints and covenant servants, and himself will preside over them. "I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of my hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people," *v.* 16.

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Before Christ pronounced this sermon, "he went up into a mountain," as if to signify, that as the Law had been delivered from Mount Sinai, so should the preaching of the Gospel begin from a mountain. The sermon was delivered after the manner of the Jewish Doctors, who sat down when they taught, Luke iv. 16–20.

Our blessed Lord, having by his miracles established his divine authority, and acquired a powerful influence over the minds of his hearers, now proceeded to explain to them, in some degree, the nature of his *religion;* the duties which it required, and the dispositions which it promoted. In the very outset of his public instruction, he makes known, in decided terms, the peculiar temper, spirit, and character of his religion; and he shows his disciples, that these were entirely opposed to all those splendid and popular qualities, which were the great objects of applause and admiration among the heathen.

The object of this discourse is, evidently, to point out the great difference between Christ's religion, or doctrine, and that of the Scribes and Pharisees. They aimed at

the possession of power, rank, and riches; *he* recommended humility, with all its kindred virtues. He commends "the poor in spirit: for theirs is the *kingdom of heaven*," *v.* 3. (*a*) By *poverty of spirit* is not to be understood meanness connected with avarice, but a disposition of mind, meek, humble, submissive to power, void of ambition, patient of injuries, and free from all resentment. This spirit, so new, so opposite to all Pagan, and all Rabbinical moralists, was deemed by them contemptible. And so it appears to almost all who are called Christians, even at this day. They not only reject it in practice, but disavow it in principle, although it has the explicit declaration of their Master; and they substitute for it what they call "principles of honor." Hence, national wars, low considerations of commercial interests, the balance of rival powers, or the ambition of princes.

The practice of the world cannot, however, alter the nature of things. *Pride* was not intended for man, but *humility;* and this probably belongs to his dependent situation, and is the only disposition of mind which can enable him to enjoy ease and quiet here, and happiness hereafter.

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This salvation was to be proclaimed to the captives, and "to the end of the world." It refers, therefore, to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which was to be proclaimed to every creature. "Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold my salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him," *v.* 11: that is, he has caused the great trumpet to sound as a signal, to gather the dispersed Jews together, xxvii. 13; or, he has sent preachers of the Gospel to all parts of the world, in order to the conversion of the Jews.

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In this chapter he narrates what passed between him and the other apostles, and particularly between him and

St. Peter. "Fourteen years after," *v.* 1, refers to the epoch of his conversion, when the first general council was held at Jerusalem to settle the controversy respecting circumcision, which arose after the conversion of Cornelius. St. Peter himself became an advocate for the Gentiles, who, it was agreed, should be exempted from the Mosaic yoke; and yet when St. Peter came to Antioch, soon after, while St. Paul and St. Barnabas were there, Acts xv. 35, his natural timidity returned, and he temporized in such a manner that St. Paul was provoked to reprove him publicly. He "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed," *v.* 11; for "when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision," *v.* 12. "And the other Jews dissembled," so that "Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation," *v.* 13. He reproves St. Peter, because he, being a Jew, and living after the manner of the Gentiles, compels the Gentiles to live as the Jews do.

He then speaks of the fundamental doctrine,—*the true religion* of the Gospel *Church—justification by faith.* He shows the practice of the Jewish Christians themselves. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ," *v.* 15.

The third Homily thus expresses it: This Faith is the strong rock and foundation of the Christian religion; this doctrine all old and ancient authors of Christ's Church do approve; this doctrine advanceth and setteth forth the true glory of Christ, and beateth down the vain glory of man; this whoever denieth is not to be accounted for a Christian man, nor for a setter forth of Christ's glory; but for an adversary to Christ and his Gospel, and for a setter forth of man's vain-glory.

CATECHISM.

"The Holy Catholic Church."

The Church is said to consist in its unity, its holiness, and its universality. The last of these is applicable to the subject for the day,—The Universal Church.

By the Catholic Church, we understand the whole body of Christians in all places, and at all times of our era. The Jewish Church was confined to one place, and comprised only the inhabitants of one nation. The Christian Church comprehends all nations, and extends to the utmost parts of the earth; so that, in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him. The Jews once were the only people of God; and Jerusalem was the sole place of worship. "He showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel," Ps. cxlvii. 19. Now, our blessed Saviour according to prophecy, hath "the heathen" for his "inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession," Ps. ii. 8.

The apostles were first sent, only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but, afterwards, their commission was enlarged, and they were to teach all nations, and preach the Gospel to every creature, that they all may be one fold under one great "Shepherd and Bishop" of their souls, 1 Pet. ii. 25. From this universal spread of the Church, it is properly styled "Catholic." 2. It is called Catholic, from the faith professed and received in it, which is the same every where. 3. It is so called, from the fact, that certain public acts, done by it in one place, are

universally valid and binding every where. Thus, they who, by baptism, are received into a particular or national Church, thereby become members of the Catholic Church, and are to be admitted to the worship and communion of it, in all places, unless they exclude themselves by their own default. And they who are duly excommunicated or excluded from any particular church, are thereby excluded from all the privileges of the Catholic Church, and may not be admitted to them any where, till they reconcile themselves by submission and penitence.

Thus, the Christian Church is Catholic, that is, coextensive with the earth. For the Scripture account of the Church, as a congregation of God's people, who meet together for divine worship, see Acts vii. 38; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; Rom. xvi. 5; Col. iv. 15; Philem. 2. For an account of the Church, as the entire Christian Society, of which Jesus is the head, and each true Christian is a member,—called the body of Christ,—see Acts xx. 29; 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. i. 22, 23; Col. i. 18; Heb. xii. 23.

ARTICLE XIX.

The visible Church of Christ is a *congregation* of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

The Church is said to be a *congregation*, and not *congregations;* whence we may observe, that although the visible Church may consist of many congregations, yet they are still considered as one congregation, all

being built upon one foundation-stone; all being members of one and the same body, and all agreeing in one and the same faith.

Every one of these congregations is itself a particular Church, as the Church of Thyatira, of Pergamos, of Philadelphia, of Ephesus; but in reference to the one Head by whom they are governed, and the one Faith in which they agree,—they are all one Catholic or *Universal* Church; all, the one visible Church spoken of in this Article. The visible Church is a congregation; but every congregation is not the visible Church.

To distinguish this from all other congregations, it is here said, in the second place, "*The* visible Church is a congregation of faithful men." It is a Congregation of such men as profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; all that profess true faith in Christ, are of the visible Church; and there are no members of the visible Church, but such only as profess faith in Christ. Therefore is the Church called, in the Creed, the "holy Catholic Church;" not as if every person in it was really holy, really a saint, really a believer in Christ. We know, that the visible Church here on earth is like the floor with both wheat and chaff, Matt. iii. 12; and like a field in which are both tares and wheat, Matt. xiii. 24.

The Church is called, in the Creed, "the holy Catholic Church," because there are no members of the visible Church, except such as profess holiness and faith, although they may not be really faithful and holy. That the Church is a congregation of faithful men, of such as *profess faith in Christ*, is plain from the constant practice of the Church, in all ages, never to admit any into communion with it, but such as have either by themselves or their sureties made such a profession.

"They that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added" to the Church "about three thousand souls," Acts ii. 41. That the Church must necessarily be a congregation of faithful men, see 1 Cor. i. 2; Col. i. 2; 1 Tim. iii. 15.

REFLECTIONS.

From the Church's being Catholic or Universal, we learn not only the goodness of God in extending the bounds of his Church to the ends of the earth, as a means for the salvation of all men; but we learn, too, our own duty, which is to continue members of it to our lives' end. Out of the Church there is ordinarily no salvation.

We learn also the necessity and reasonableness of believing in "the Communion of Saints;" that there is a fellowship subsisting between the several members of this Catholic Church, "who, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." And we should adhere to this body of Christians, which, diffused over the earth, retains the faith which was taught, and the discipline which was settled, and the peace which was enjoined, by our Lord and his disciples.

The duties which we acknowledge that we are obliged to perform, in relation to the Universal Church, and which in effect we promise to observe, are: 1. We do and will continue in the truth of the Christian doctrine, delivered by our Saviour and his Apostles, attested by the general consent of all churches, avoiding all

novelties of opinion which deviate from apostolical doctrine;—2. We will maintain charity to all good Christians;—3. We will communicate with all good Churches, and all societies sincerely professing faith, charity, and obedience to our Lord, so as to join with them, as occasion shall require, in all offices of piety, and maintain good fellowship with them;—4. We will submit to the discipline and order, preserve the peace, and contribute to the welfare, of that portion of the Church where we live; for, what is beneficial or injurious to a single member of it, is so, in a measure, to the whole;—5. We disavow all factions and combinations of persons, who corrupt the truth of Christian doctrine, or who disturb the peace of the Church or any part of it;—finally, we sincerely wish in our hearts, earnestly pray for, and by our best endeavors will promote, the peace and prosperity of the whole Catholic Church, whereof we profess to be members, following, as St. Paul directs, "righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart," 2 Tim. ii. 22.

Like Noah's weary dove,
  That soared the earth around,
But not a resting-place above
  The cheerless waters found;

Oh, cease my wandering soul,
  On restless wing to roam;
All the wide world, to either pole,
  Has not for thee a home.

Behold the Ark of God,
  Behold the open door;
Hasten to gain that dear abode,
  And rove, my soul, no more.

There, safe thou shalt abide,
  There, sweet shall be thy rest,
And every longing satisfied,
  With full salvation blest.

And when the waves of ire
  Again the earth shall fill,
The Ark shall ride the sea of fire;
  Then rest on Sion's hill.

The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.[a]

THE COLLECT.

O God, whose blessed Son was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 8; Heb. ii. 14; Luke x. 17, 18.

And make us the sons of God, John i. 12, 13; Gal. iv. 4, 5, 6.

And heirs of eternal life; Rom. viii. 17; Tit. iii. 3, 4, 7; 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

Grant us, we beseech thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as he is pure; 1 John iii. 3; 2 Cor. vii. 1; 1 Pet. i. 14, 15, 16.

That, when he shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; Matt. xxiv. 30; xxv. 31; Col. iii. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 49.

Where, with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, he liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen. Heb. i. 8; Rev. iv. 8; Ps. xxix. 10; Rev. xix. 6.

(a) The Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, for the sixth Sunday, were all added at the last review of the Book of Common Prayer. Until that time, if there happened to be six Sundays after the Epiphany, the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, for the fifth Sunday were repeated.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

Heavenly affections: and *desires* to be like Christ at his second coming.

The Collect combines, in a beautiful manner, a prayer, a lesson on the mystery of the incarnation, the purification it requires, and the last appearance to which it points.

The great object for which the Son of God was manifested, is prominently set forth at the beginning of the Collect, as declared by St. John, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," 1 John iii. 8.

Wicked fallen angels had brought sin and death into the world; and, as the spiritual foe had begun his work of destruction upon the soul of man, so would he have continued it, unsubdued and unchecked, had not the sacrifice of the Son of God been accepted, as an atonement for sin. By this atonement Christ destroyed the works of the devil, and restored the fairest part of creation, the soul, to its original excellence, making men again capable of becoming "the sons of God," and "heirs of the kingdom," 1 John iii. 1; James ii. 5. We pray, therefore, that whilst we are in the body, "we may be like unto him in his eternal kingdom." The attainment of happiness, is the object of our petition in the Collect, although we first pray for the attainment of purity; for, purity is the appointed preparation for attaining and enjoying that happiness.

To an impure mind, the employment of the inhabitants of heaven would be torment; and, to a heart devoted to the pleasures of sense, the joys of a spiritual state would be bitterness. The revealed Word of God is distinct upon this point. In the book of the Revelation of St.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISAIAH LXII.

The promise of the Church's righteousness, made in the last chapter, is the subject of the prophet's importunity. From this he seems to have resolved not to desist, until it should be accomplished. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth," *v.* 1. He calls also upon all the watchmen of Zion, her Priests and Levites, who kept watch day and night, in the purlieus of the temple, to unite with him in prayers for her prosperity. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence," *v.* 6.

This salvation was to be proclaimed to the captives, and "to the end of the world." It refers, therefore, to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which was to be proclaimed to every creature. "Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold my salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him," *v.* 11: that is, he has caused the great trumpet to sound as a signal, to gather the dispersed Jews together, xxvii. 13; or, he has sent preachers of the Gospel to all parts of the world, in order to the conversion of the Jews.

The application of the concluding verses to our Saviour when on earth, plainly shows, that these chapters

had a further reference than temporal salvation; and that all these temporal promises were indicative of blessings spiritual and eternal; that Jerusalem,—or the Church,—restored on earth, was typical of Jerusalem above, which is the mother of us all, Matt. xxi. 5; John xii. 15; Gal. iv. 26. None are to be called "the redeemed of the Lord," but those who are "the holy people." God shall seek them out and find them, wherever dispersed. "Thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken," *v.* 12.

Second Lesson, GAL. II.

According to the statement made by St. Paul, in this chapter, respecting himself, it would appear, that from the first planting of Christianity there had been a difference of apprehension, between those Christians who had been Jews, and those who had been Gentiles. Many of those who were originally Jews, retained a regard for the ceremonial law, and endeavored to keep up its reputation; but those who had been Gentiles, had comparatively little regard for the law of Moses, and considered pure Christianity as the perfection of natural religion.

St. Peter was "the Apostle of the Circumcision;" and he preached the Gospel to the Jewish converts. The ceremonial law not being entirely abolished by the Gospel, he connived at the respect entertained for it. But St. Paul was "the Apostle of the Gentiles;" and, although a Hebrew of the Hebrews, he adhered to pure Christianity.

In this chapter he narrates what passed between him and the other apostles, and particularly between him and

THE GOSPEL.—St. Matt. xxiv. 23–31.

The Epistle directed our thoughts to that strength and light which is within; and now, the Gospel informs us of those dangers which are *without*, in this our time of waiting; until our Lord's great and last appearing. In the Collect, we pray, "that when he shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto him." At the beginning of this chapter, our Saviour predicted the destruction of the temple. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, his disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming? *v.* 3. Christ, in his answer, does not expressly correct the erroneous opinions of his disciples; but he looks beyond their question, and instructs his Church, not only concerning the events of that age, the destruction of Jerusalem, but concerning his second coming, at the end of time, here made the subject of his discourse.

What follows is altogether exhortatory. It may be called the moral of the prophecy; and the practical application of it, not only to his immediate hearers, but to his disciples in all future ages. This concluding admonition most certainly alludes, not less to the final judgment, than to the destruction of Jerusalem; and it applies, with at least equal force, to both. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other, *v.* 31. In this may be symbolized *the trumpet of the Gospel;* and, by "his elect," *the Gentiles.* But it has a further interpretation.

The prophecy itself relates, in its primary and strictest sense, to the destruction of the temple, city, and government of Jerusalem; yet, it may be considered, and was probably intended by Christ, as a type of the dissolution of the world itself, to which the total subversion of a great city and of a whole nation bears some resemblance. But, with respect to the conclusion, there can be no doubt of its design to call attention to the last day of account. It is an admonition to us, to prepare for that great and solemn event.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISA. LXV.

In this chapter, God answers the previous complaints of the Jews, concerning their dereliction; and now, as this evangelical prophecy draws towards its conclusion, he tells them that *they* rejected the preaching of Christ and his apostles, whereas *the Gentiles* readily received it. "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts," *v.* 1, 2. Yet, in the cluster, a few good grapes are to be found, and one speaks to another that would pluck it from the tree to spare it, so God will refrain from destroying the whole nation, in consideration of a few good persons, called "the remnant," Rom. ix. 27; xi. 5.

While his judgments shall pursue the rejected Jews,

there shall be blessings reserved for the Christian Church, which shall be its joy and glory. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind," *v.* 17. The conversion of the Jews will be in "the latter days" of this world, Hos. iii. 5. Then shall follow the new heavens and the new earth. This will come to pass after the dissolution of the world, 2 Pet. iii. 12; Rev. xxi. 1.

Such a new state of things, St. Peter tells us, we are to expect, according to God's promises; which were to have their full accomplishment in the Gospel Church, militant first, and at length *triumphant.* "Jerusalem which is above is free," and is "the mother of us all," Gal. iv. 26. The glorified saints there have forgotten this world; and there shall be no alloy in this happy condition of the Church. "The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her," *v.* 19. If this relates to any state of the Church in this life, it shall long enjoy tranquillity. But, in heaven, it shall have a full accomplishment, with respect to the perfection and the perpetuity of the promise, "I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy," *v.* 18.

Second Lesson, MATT. VI.

Here is a continuation of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount; and there is much in it appropriate to the subject for the day, as it respects the state of mind which we should have in our religious duties. We should avoid all ostentation in the performance of them. As to almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, "When thou doest alms,

let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," *v.* 3. "Pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly," *v.* 6. At the same time he dictates his beautiful and comprehensive prayer, for our constant use. And as to fasting, "That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret," *v.* 18.

Another fundamental precept of the Christian religion, is the necessity of giving the first place in our hearts to God, and pursuing other things in subordination to that great object. "No man," says our Lord, "can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon," *v.* 24. We can faithfully serve but one Master,—God. The concerns and comforts of this life may have their due place in our hearts; but they must not be first. This is the prerogative of God alone. Religion must be supreme and paramount. The ruling passion of the Christian, must be the love of his Maker and Redeemer. This must principally occupy his thoughts, his affections, his time, and his attention.

We are admonished, at the close of the lesson, as to what constitutes the sum and substance of our whole duty. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" that "eternal and glorious kingdom" which is the subject of our Collect for this day. And with the happiness of this kingdom seek the righteousness thereof. Wisdom must be early sought. Let our waking thoughts be of God; and then may we confidently trust in the gracious promise annexed, that all these things,—the necessary supports of life,—"shall be added" unto us.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, ISAIAH LXVI.

God here gives an answer to the complaints of the Jews, concerning the destruction of the temple, which they so passionately bewail, lxiii. 18; lxiv. 11. He instructs them in the evangelical way of worshipping him, in spirit and in truth; not merely by sacrifices, and a carnal worship. "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" For "all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word," *v.* 1 and 2. Here is shown a contempt of mere ceremonial services, in comparison with moral duties; and the judgments of God are denounced against those who continued their idolatrous and superstitious worship, *v.* 18. "They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together," *v.* 18.

Here that cardinal precept of the Christian religion is brought to mind, which was enforced in the second morning lesson,—the duty of giving the first place in our affections to God; for, in the day of vengeance, secret wickedness will be brought to light. "I know their works and *their thoughts*," *v.* 18.

The prophet, at the close of his prophecy, looks forward to the establishment of the Church on sure foundations, and thence to "the last days," the end of the

world. The kingdom of the Messiah is here described as "the new heavens and the new earth," which "shall remain before me, saith the Lord," *v.* 22. Before, they had appointed seasons at which to sacrifice; now, there shall be one continual Sabbath, so that all times and seasons shall be appropriated to the saints in glory, Rev. vii. 15. New commandments are given, relating both to heaven and earth; and new promises, relating to both; so that they are new heavens and a new earth that God will create, and these are a preparation for the new heavens and new earth at the end of time, 2 Peter iii. 13.

Second Lesson, GAL. III.

Christ being manifested to make us the *sons of God* and *heirs of eternal life*, we pray that, having this hope, "we may purify ourselves," and that we may be made like unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom. The apostle recounts, in this chapter, the promise made to Abraham: "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xxii. 18. He shows, that we cannot be justified but by faith; for we are condemned by the law, and God entered into covenant with Abraham, for himself and his seed, on condition of faith.

An executed contract between men binds both parties to it, so that neither of them can recede from it, especially where it is a covenant made for one *and his heirs;* that is, "after the manner of men," "though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto," *v.* 15. The Levitical law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul this covenant; for God gave *it*,—the

inheritance,—to Abraham, by promise, *v.* 18. The apostle, after telling the Galatians that the law, being by its various expiating sacrifices typical of the great Mediator, was their "*schoolmaster*" (*a*) to bring them to Christ, proclaims the great doctrine and the excellent privilege which, by faith, were the result of the covenant with Abraham. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

Circumcision was the initiatory rite, as the seal of the covenant made with Abraham; and now, we are recognized as heirs or *sons* of God, by *baptism*. "As many of you as have been baptized unto Christ have first put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise," *v.* 27, 28, 29.

CATECHISM.

"From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

In this article of our Creed, we profess to believe in Christ's second coming. *From thence he shall come.* Of this there are many clear and express revelations in Holy Scripture. *Enoch*, "the seventh from Adam," prophesied of it, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints," Jude 14. Daniel, in his vision, saw one "like the Son of man" coming in the clouds of heaven, Dan. vii. 13, 14. And it was foretold

(*a*) Παιδαγωγός, preceptor.

by Christ himself, Mark xiv. 62; and by angels, Acts i. 11.

At his first coming Christ was in great humility; but his second coming shall be suddenly, Matt. xxiv. 42, 44; Mark xiii. 32; and with power and great glory, Matt. xxiv. 30; xxvi. 64; attended with a numerous train of angels, and appearing with a majesty and splendor, suitable to the greatness of his person, and to the dignity of his mission. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels," Matt. xvi. 27; xxv. 31. Christ himself told his disciples, more than once, "I go away, and come again unto you," John xiv. 3, 28. The angels said to the men of Galilee, after a cloud had received Christ out of their sight, "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," Acts i. *v.* 11. He shall come from thence in the clouds of heaven, Luke xxi. 27; thus, in a literal sense, making the clouds his chariot, and walking upon the wings of the wind, Ps. civ. 3.

At this time, the saints that sleep in the dust shall awake, and be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, saluting him in his return from the higher regions. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him," 1 Thess. iv. 14. It appears from various parts of Holy Scripture, that the great object and end of Christ's second coming is to judge the world; "that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. v. 10. Our talents of time, wealth, learning, honor or power, with all our advantages and opportunities of doing good,—all our thoughts, words, and actions,—

shall be judged by the Gospel rule. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge" you "in the last day," John xii. 48. And we are warned by our own consciences: if our hearts should be forgetful, "God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things," 1 John iii. 20. See Acts x. 42; 2 Tim. iv. 1; 1 Pet. iv. 5; to judge them for their actions, words, and thoughts, Eccl. xii. 14; Matt. xii. 36, 37; Jude 15; Mal. ii. 17; Rom. ii. 16; 1 Cor. iv. 5; 1 Thess. iv. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52; and to judge the quick and the dead, Heb. ix. 27; Rev. xx. 12, 13.

ARTICLE IV.

——— "And there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day."

Christ ascended into heaven; and he will there remain, until his second coming to judgment, "until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began," Acts iii. 21; x. 42. The time of this judgment is called "the last day;" for, the years and days which this world is to endure, are fixed by God, though neither men nor angels can tell when they shall end. Then shall our Lord *return* from heaven, to judge both the quick and the dead, and shall render to every man according to his works.

When all God's design with this world is accomplished, it shall be destroyed by fire; and all souls shall re-enter, every one into its own body, newly moulded, a habitation suitable for everlasting joy or misery. Then shall Christ *appear* visibly in the *clouds*

of heaven, where every eye shall see him. He shall appear in his own glory, that is, in his human glorified body. He shall *appear* in the glory of his angels, having vast numbers of these about him and attending upon him. Above all, he shall appear in his Father's glory, that is, there shall be a wonderful *manifestation* of the Eternal Godhead dwelling in him; and he shall pass sentence on all who ever lived upon earth, according to all that they have done in the body, whether it be good or bad. The righteous shall ascend as he did, and shall meet him in the clouds, and be for ever with him. The wicked shall sink into a state of unspeakable and everlasting misery. See Acts xvii. 31; 2 Tim. iv. 1; Acts x. 42; 2 Cor. v. 10; 2 Pet. iii. 10, 11, 12; 1 Pet. iv. 3, 5; Rom. ii. 12, 16; Luke ix. 26; Rom. xiv. 10–12; Matt. xxv. 31–46; 2 Cor. v. 10; 1 Thess. iv. 17; Dan. xii. 2.

REFLECTIONS.

From the certainty of our Lord's coming to judge the world, let us learn frequently to think of and prepare for it. It should keep us mindful of our duty, and ever watchful lest this day surprise us, or find us unprepared for it. "What manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God," 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12.

The thought that Christ will be our judge, may afford the greatest joy, hope, and consolation, to all good men; for, Christ being their judge, they may be assured of finding mercy. To all wicked men, who must be judged by him whom they have despised and crucified, the

thought of being judged by Christ will add to their dismay, at the revelation of his wrath. Let us, then, cultivate kindly affections, and refrain from uncharitable censures. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest:" for "thinkest thou" "that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" Rom. ii. 1, 3. Under the unjust censures and reproaches of men, let us reflect that, if we are innocent, God will one day "bring forth" our "righteousness as the light," and our "judgment as the noon-day," Ps. xxxvii. 6. We should also faithfully improve our talent, and the opportunities which God affords us; because we are but stewards, and must render an account. We are inclined to covet wealth, and to aspire to places of honor and power; but, too often, we do not well consider the nature of that which we so eagerly desire and pursue, and which will bring upon us a heavier account. Let us then strive to "purify ourselves," so that, when our blessed Lord shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made "like unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom," 1 John iii. 2.

Septuagesima,
Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima Sundays.

DIES IRÆ.

The day of wrath! that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away;
What power shall be the sinner's stay?
Whom shall he trust that dreadful day?

When, shrivelling like a parched scroll,
The flaming heavens together roll,
When, louder yet, and yet more dread,
Swells the high trump, that wakes the dead:

Oh, on that day, that wrathful day,
When man to judgment wakes from clay,
Be thou, O Christ, the sinner's stay,
Though heaven and earth shall pass away!

SEPTUAGESIMA, SEXAGESIMA, AND QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAYS.

THE first Sunday in Lent is called Quadragesima Sunday, because it is about forty days before Easter, and Quadragesima signifies in Latin, *fortieth.* Fifty being the next round number above forty, the Sunday immediately preceding Quadragesima Sunday, being about fifty days before Easter, is called Quinquagesima Sunday, or *fiftieth* day. And the two preceding Sundays are called Sexagesima and Septuagesima Sundays, that is, *sixtieth* and *seventieth* day before Easter.

The design of these Sundays, is to prepare us for fasting and humiliation in the approaching season of Lent; and, from deep meditation on the manner of Christ's coming into the world, to reflect upon the causes of it,—our sins and miseries. Convinced of the reasonableness of mortifying ourselves for our sins, we may strictly and religiously apply ourselves to this duty, when the proper season for it shall come. In the early days of the Church, some of the more devout Christians observed the whole time from the first of these Sundays

to Easter, as a season for humiliation and fasting; but the general custom was to begin on Ash-Wednesday.

The observance of these days, it is said, was as ancient as the time of Gregory the Great, who lived about the year of our Lord 590.

Septuagesima Sunday.

THE COLLECT.

O Lord, we beseech thee favorably to hear the prayers of thy people, Ps. lxix. 16; xiii. 3; Jer. xxix. 12, 13, 14.

That we, who are justly punished for our offences, Ezra ix. 13; Neh. ix. 33; Ps. cvi. 6; cvii. 17.

May be mercifully delivered by thy goodness, Ps. lxxx. 3, 4; xxv. 7; xxii. 4, 5; liii. 1.

For the glory of thy name; through Jesus Christ our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen. Ps. cxv. 1; Dan. ix. 18; Jer. iv. 7.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY

Deliverance from Judgments: Perseverance in Humility.

There is a spirit of deep humility in the Collect for this day, which is especially requisite in the Christian, when he is preparing his mind to observe, with due and appropriate seriousness, the returning season of Lent.

We entreat the Lord, "favorably to hear the prayers of his people." This expression evidently supposes the supplicant to have his soul deeply impressed with the true spirit of Christianity, which requires its followers "to humble themselves in the sight of the Lord," James

iv. 10. Therefore, in approaching the throne of the Almighty, we feel and confess ourselves unworthy to offer unto him any sacrifice; even the sacrifice of prayer, which owes its acceptance to his grace and mercy.

As the exercise of one duty naturally and almost imperceptibly leads to the exercise of others, and as each assists in removing successively the various obstacles which severally present themselves to us in the course of Christian obedience, so when we have earnestly entered upon the practice of any particular grace,—humility, zeal, self-denial, or hope,—the difficulties of the duty are usually removed. But even if they *increase*, we become more and more able to contend against them. Thus, when we are sufficiently humble to feel that our prayers are accepted only by grace, we can understand that our preservation from evil is so far from being deserved, that it is vouchsafed, of unmerited favor; and we are soon brought to confess our unworthiness, and to feel that we are *justly punished for our offences.* By such confessions of infirmity and unworthiness, we are rendered more fit for God's service. So, in this Collect, with humility and a well grounded faith we beseech God, to deliver us from the evil of sin; and we speak of his mercy, his goodness, and the glory of his name, which are presented in their proper order. His *mercy* calls for the exercise of his *love;* and both must be infinitely exerted, before he can save for the glory of his name. No plea will avail for the exercise of his love; and no hope can be encouraged that, for his name's sake, he will save us, except *through Jesus Christ.* On this account, the Saviour is mentioned *last in order.* He is our final hope. All our pleadings must begin and end *in him.*

THE EPISTLE.—Cor. ix. 24, *to the end of the chapter.*

In the preceding part of this chapter, the apostle mentioned several acts of condescension, which were not compulsory, but to which he submitted, for the advancement of the blessed Gospel of salvation, and for those rewards which he knew to be infinitely more than a compensation for all that he could do or suffer in that glorious cause. This suggested another topic, from which, on account of the habits of the Corinthians, he might add the greater force to his exhortation and example.

The honor sought for, in contests at the Olympic games, was but a crown of withering leaves, to be secured by one only, and yet as eagerly and painfully contended for, as if every one could obtain it. St. Paul's expression of "one obtaining the prize" is not intended to lessen our hopes, but to encourage our labors. It is meant to teach us, that the utmost we are able to do is of small account, that the benefit we have in view will recompense our efforts, and that every one of us should, for this reason, exert himself as vigorously, and be as active and zealous in the contest, as if but one of the number could win the prize.

Allusion is here made to the government of sensual appetites and passions, which men so frequently allow to control and mislead them, to the great injury of their souls. The apostle compares the contest (with his adversary, the body,) to wrestling, which was one of the Olympic games. The Christian is to maintain this contest, during his life on earth. God has implanted those natural desires in us, for good purposes; and religion

does not utterly root them out and destroy them, but teaches us rightly to direct them, and to bring them into subjugation. We are devoutly to improve the day of grace, and to practise self-denial. God has not imposed upon us arbitrary laws, making life a burden; but has commanded us to maintain a conflict which the condition of human nature renders unavoidable. He requires us to subdue such desires, and deny ourselves such gratifications, as are inconsistent with the purity and sobriety, the charity and heavenly-mindedness, to which the Christian is called.

THE GOSPEL.—St. Matt. xx. 1 *to* 17.

This parable of the laborers in the vineyard, may be applied to the case of all mankind, Jews and Gentiles. It teaches, that God has frequently renewed his call, and enlarged the discoveries of his will, by successive dispensations, which answer to the several hours mentioned in the parable.

We may also apply the parable to particular Christians. The Apostles left all and followed Christ, and the primitive Christians embraced his doctrine steadfastly at the peril of their liberties, their fortunes, and their lives. Yet, in after ages of the Gospel, they who die and have lived peaceably and quietly in the sincere profession of religion, are also promised the kingdom of heaven. Some have the advantage of a pious education; and retain their early virtue, in the several stages of life. Others either have not had that advantage, or, having had it, have unhappily neglected to improve it, and have run into the same excess of riot with the blind

and unthinking part of the world. Yet these persons, if they see, though late, that they are exposed to the *judgments* of Almighty God, and if, by divine grace, they forsake their sins and become new men, the happiness of heaven awaits them. It is the promise of God, that "when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive," Ezekiel xviii. 27. There are some, who attain to an advanced age, having passed through many trials; and who, amid toil and affliction, glorify God by their steadfast zeal. Others, with renewed hearts, and with a sincere desire to serve the Lord, are released, in early life, from this earthly scene of trial and suffering. Yet both shall come to heaven.

Our Lord often concludes his discourses, as he does here, with a short and striking reflection, which he would have us remember: *so the last shall be first and the first last;* for many be called but few chosen. This is the purport of the whole parable. Those who were first called become the last in God's kingdom, from their want of humility and charity. Others, humbled by repentance, persevere unto the end, lowly and contrite; and our heavenly Father regards their affliction when he hears their cry, and remembers for them his covenant, and repents "according to the multitude of his mercies," Ps. cvi. 44, 45.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, JER. V.

This chapter contains a vehement expostulation with the Jews, for the great corruption of their manners, and the disorders of their civil and their ecclesiastical government. Here are mingled threatenings of judgments, and reproofs for sin. The sins they are charged with, are enumerated, especially when the prophet calls so emphatically, "*Hear* now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not," *v.* 21. Having reproved them for sin, and threatened the judgments of God against them, the prophet endeavors to induce them to fear God, which would tend to their reformation; for, the absence of that fear had caused all their backsliding. "A revolting and a rebellious heart," *v.* 23, had occasioned indifference to God's preference, and pride of their own opinion, although they had evidence of the Almighty's power in setting bounds to the troubled sea, by the earth which surrounded it. "Fear ye not me?" saith the Lord: "will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the land for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?" *v.* 22.

Their sins had turned away "the former and the latter rain in his season," which produce "the appointed weeks of the harvest." Such judgments came upon them, for their stubbornness and rebellion. They are

charged also with violence and oppression, *v.* 26–28; and again are judgments threatened: "Shall I not visit for these things?" saith the Lord: "shall not my soul *be avenged* on such a nation as this?" *v.* 29. But, alas! the worst of all these evils was a concert to defile the hearts of the people, among those whose business it was to reform them. "A wonderful and horrible thing" it truly was, that the prophets should "prophesy falsely," and that the priests should bear rule by their means. But the day of reckoning was to come,—destruction and death,—the last of God's judgments on earth. "And what will ye do in the end thereof?" *v.* 31.

Second Lesson, MATT. VII.

In the last chapter, we had several admonitions, chiefly with respect to the manner of giving alms, of praying, and of fasting. Here, in the continuation of our Lord's sermon, we have much practical advice, as to our intercourse with men, and our duty to God; and, throughout, is shown the true foundation of the Christian religion. That foundation is an influential faith,—obedience to Christ's commands. This is absolutely necessary, if we would escape God's *judgments*, and ensure our present and eternal happiness. Are we cautioned against censoriousness, which was the reigning sin among the Pharisees? It is because we must be judged of God, from whom we shall receive "the greater condemnation," James iii. 1; and because if we rather judge ourselves, it is that evidence of humility, charity, and deference to God, which shall be owned and rewarded by him accordingly; "for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ," Rom. xiv. 10.

After being taught how to pray, are we admonished of its necessity, by *asking*, *seeking*, and *knocking? v.* 7; the very words imply a complete subjection to God's will, and an humble distrust of ourselves, in these appointed means. Is it said, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," *v.* 12. This golden rule curbs the pride of our hearts, in order to place others on a level with ourselves.

We are to "beware of false prophets," because they come in "sheep's clothing," outwardly appearing harmless and meek, under spurious pretensions of sanctity, "and by good and fair speeches" deceiving "the hearts of the simple," Rom. xvi. 18.

But let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. It is humility of heart, which prompts the Christian to practise what Christ preached. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth the will* of my Father which is in heaven," *v.* 21. This great truth constitutes the foundation of all the Christian's hope,—the rock upon which he can build. "Other foundation can no man" have, 1 Cor. iii. 11. "The people were astonished at Christ's doctrine," *v.* 28; for he spake in a tone of authority which no one before had the courage or the right to assume. And he enforced what he taught, by the most solemn sanctions; by a promise of eternal felicity to those who obeyed him, and a denunciation of the most tremendous judgments against those who rejected him. He who built his house upon the sand, found the awful insecurity of its position, when the rain and the floods of tribulation came. It fell: and great was the fall of it, *v.* 27.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, JER. XXII.

Zedekiah, king of Judah, had sent to inquire of the prophets, respecting the war which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, waged against him. The answer returned had no comfort in it. The Lord would turn back their own weapons upon them; "I myself will fight against you," Jer. xxi. 5. The prophet is now directed to go himself and deliver a message to the house of the king of Judah, wherein they are exhorted to perform their duty; and at the same time God's judgments are denounced, if they will not hear the command. "But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation," "and I will prepare destroyers against thee," *v.* 5, 7.

Jehoahaz, under the name of Shallum, is lamented, who was led captive by the king of Egypt, because he had forsaken the example of his father Josiah, and had usurped the right of his elder brother, 2 Kings xxiii. 34. The doom of his successor, Jehoiakim, is also pronounced, who built for himself a stately palace in those calamitous times, and who would not discharge the wages of his workmen, but maintained his own luxury by the oppression of those who were to live by their labor, Deut. xxiv. 14, 15; James v. 4. "Wo unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work," *v.* 13. For this extortion and injustice, "he shall be buried with

the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem," *v.* 19.

In opposition to his conduct, is placed the example of his good father, which aggravated the conduct of the son. Josiah, meek, and humble in spirit, could find no satisfaction in pleasures so irrational and fatal in their consequence. Jehoiakim was advised of the reward of so much integrity of character. "Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice?" "he judged the cause of the poor and needy;" then it was well with him, *v.* 15, 16.

Another message is sent to them, in the reign of Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim. They had been spoken to in a day of prosperity, by the reproofs and admonitions of God's prophets, but they would not hear, *v.* 21. For this, their king (called Coniah, in contempt), shall be carried away into captivity, and end his days in bondage." He should leave to posterity no honor; for "thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days," *v.* 30.

Second Lesson, EPH. I.

After reading an account of the severe judgments threatened by the prophets against Israel for their idolatry and impenitence, through a long succession of kings, it is refreshing to consider the blessed visitation of God in another aspect, as the result of his pure worship, of kindly affections, and of obedience to his holy will and commands. If he has said, "According to their deserts will I *judge* them," Ezek. vii. 27, he has also proclaimed, "With great *mercies* will I gather thee," Isa. liv. 7.

For this lesson, we have the Apostle Paul addressing the saints at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ, from his prison at Rome, Eph. iii. 1, and giving thanks to God because he had blessed them "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," *v.* 3. The great truth and blessings set forth and secured in Baptism, are enlarged on. By this they were admitted to "the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself," *v.* 5. They had "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins," *v.* 7, by which they "obtained an inheritance" in the kingdom of Christ, *v.* 11, "in whom," after they believed, they "were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise," "the earnest of their inheritance," *v.* 13, 14.

The great design of God in bestowing all their spiritual privileges was, that they should be "to the praise of his glory," *v.* 14. For this reason he makes his earnest prayer for the Ephesians, that they might have their understanding enlightened, which would enable them to know "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Men of the world are governed by sensuality and evil passions, which lead to fearful consequences; but believers cherish habitual hopes of heaven, in contemplating the transcendent dignity and power of Christ, who is above all, and whose authority is over all; "angels and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him," 1 Peter iii. 22. The Apostle bursts into a rapture, in view of the glories of Christ's exaltation, when he describes him as being set "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and

gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all," *v.* 21, 22, 23.

CATECHISM.

——"And visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and show mercy unto thousands in them that love me, and keep my commandments."

This portion of the Second Commandment, is taken from the justice of God in punishing transgressions. To *visit* is sometimes taken in the sense of looking upon another with an eye of *compassion*, as when David prays, "Visit me with thy salvation," Ps. cvi. 4.—Sometimes, with an eye of vengeance, Lev. xxvi. 39. In this sense it occurs here.

God threatens to punish the offenders against this Law: 1,—He visits their sins upon the fathers themselves, many examples of which are found in Scripture. God executed his judgments upon idolaters, and frequently punished his own people when they revolted from him, and set up their molten images. 2,—He visits the sins of the fathers upon the children. This we see verified in many of the kings of Israel and of Judah, who, for their idolatry, were punished in their own persons, and also in their posterity. God recompenses "the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them," Jer. xxxii. 18. 3,—To "the third and fourth generation," those being the generations that a man may live to see; and, as the prosperity of children is one of the greatest comforts of human life, and their

misery is the greatest affliction of a parent, men are here deterred from transgressing the commandment, by this denunciation of vengeance.

The other branch of this Law, is taken from the goodness of God. The persons and the posterity of those who love him, and keep his commandments. He will not forbear from punishing the children of good men, if their children forsake his law and keep not his commandments. He will visit their "offences with the rod, and their sin with scourges," Ps. lxxxix. 32.—"Nevertheless," saith he, "my loving kindness will I not utterly take from" them; that is, he will deal more favorably with them for their parents' sake. The misdeeds of some shall not interrupt his kindness to the rest of their posterity, or extinguish the memory of their goodness. This is verified in the posterity of Abraham and of the other patriarchs. Many provocations were overlooked for their sake; and mercy was mingled with severity. Lest any should vainly expect these evidences of divine goodness, without observing the conditions, the last words of the Commandment confine these wholly to such as, in the spirit of humility, love God and keep his commandments.—He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, John xiv. 21, 24. —"If any man love me, he will keep my commandments," *v.* 23. See, as to visitation for sins, Gen. xv. 16; Exod. xvii. 8–16; 1 Sam. xv. 2, 3; Deut. xxv. 17–19; 2 Sam. xii. 14; 1 Kings xxi. 21, 22; 2 Kings ix. 7, 8; x. 10, 11; Isa. xxxix. 2, 7; Prov. iii. 33; Ezek. xviii. 20; Matt. xxiii. 32; Luke xi. 50, 51. As to mercy for those who love God, and keep his commandments, see Num. xxv. 11–13; Ps. ciii. 17; John xiv. 15; Deut. vii. 9; Ps. xxxvii. 25.

ARTICLE XVII.

"He hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honor."

Our Saviour Christ united the divine and human nature in one person; and, by shedding the blood of man, he appeased the divine wrath. He offered himself a sacrifice to God, not only for *original sin* but also for the *actual sins of men.* As a sin offering, he propitiated God and obtained pardon, not only for the natural corruptions of our sinful hearts, but also for the actual provocations of our sinful lives; and he thus averted God's judgments.

It is impossible that God could inflict punishment, except on account of sin; and this not existing in Christ, he could not have any punishment for *himself.* He must therefore have suffered for *us* whose nature he had assumed. This whole nature sinned in Adam; and so did this whole nature suffer for sin in Christ. Every one of us, although now justly punished for his offences, who shall by faith take Christ for his Saviour, may justly expect freedom from that punishment which Christ has already suffered for him. Christ is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John i. 29. He "bare our sins in his own body," 1 Pet. ii. 24. He gave "his life a ransom for many," Matt. xx. 28. He is "the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," 1 John ii. 2; Rom. iii. 25; Eph. i. 7; Col. i.

14, 20, 21, 22; Heb. ix. 11, 12, 13, 14; x. 10, 12, 14, 19; xiii. 12, 20.

Christ's death was our sacrifice: the meaning of which is,—God, intending to reconcile the world to himself, and to encourage sinners to repent and turn to him, thought fit to offer pardon of sin, together with the other blessings of the Gospel, in such a manner as should demonstrate both the guilt of sin, and his hatred of it, and yet, with all that, his love for sinners, and his compassion towards them. Our nature's being so nearly related and united to God as to make but one person with him, we may well believe, that he will avert his wrath from us, and accept those who by faith shall lay hold upon him, and by repentance turn unto him. This being the intention of his assuming our nature, and of all his acts in it, he suffered truly as a sacrifice, *not only for original sin, but for actual sins of men;* so that, offering himself a sacrifice for our sins, he reconciled the Father to us. See Col. i. 12, 13, 14; Gal. iii. 10, 13; 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14; John xv. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 22; i. 30; Rom. v. 2.

REFLECTIONS.

The services appointed for this day, have directed our attention to the acquirement and cultivation of humility, in order to a strict observance of God's holy will and commandments. By this means, through faith in Christ, we may expect deliverance from his judgments, and enjoy the hope of happiness hereafter. In order to acquire this excellent grace, as we are admonished by the precepts and example of St. Paul, great energy of mind is necessary. This is figuratively ex-

pressed, by those who run the race or engage in the combat for a prize. All obedience must be yielded to rules; and every physical energy must be put forth, in order to excel.

We are not at liberty to choose whether we will or will not engage in the race or combat for the "incorruptible crown." We actually engage at our baptism, "manfully to fight under" Christ's "banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our life's end." We cannot retract, without desertion and apostasy; and we are bound to disengage ourselves from the weight of our corrupt affections, mortifying them by abstinence and other holy severities, at this season of humiliation and fasting.

Let the case of the morning laborers, in the Gospel for this day, teach us to be humble and charitable, not *puffed* up with a vain opinion of our own services and claims, and not disposed to depreciate those of our brethren. Let us look for our recompense, with all submission and thankfulness; and rejoice in the happiness of others. And when we contemplate the defection of the Jews, in their idolatry and iniquity, which brought God's sure judgments upon them; when we reflect upon his repeated promises of favor, on their return to him, as in the case of good king Josiah; and especially when we consider the important duties of almsgiving and of fasting, as the means of acquiring godly dispositions, as set forth in the services for the day; we must be convinced, that to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry," 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23.

HUMILITY.

Humility, thou art as lovely a gem
As smiles in the Christian's diadem;
All purity, gentleness, meekness, and love,
With the heart of the lamb, and the eye of the dove.

What is pride's vain pomp, or the boasted bliss
Independence can offer? Alas! it is this,—
When man, fallen man, stands forth in his pride,
He spurns at the love of the Crucified!

Why stand in thy weakness? Oh, suffer, proud man,
That goodness should finish what goodness began;
Let the strength of the Saviour establish thy feet,
For his love never fails, and his work is complete.

Come hither, Humility;—oh, nestle here,
Dove of peace! Yes, I feel thy soft influence near;
Then fly not away, for the blessed One died,
To raise lowliness high, but to trample on pride.

When forth from the clouds the fierce tempest has broke,
It rends with its lightning the gnarl'd, stubborn oak;
But the reed in its lowliness bows to the blast,
And humility bends, but is raised at the last.

Sexagesima Sunday.

THE COLLECT.

O Lord God, who seest that we put not our trust in any thing that we do, Heb. iv. 13; 2 Cor. i. 9; Ps. xx. 7, 8; cxxv. 1; Matt. xxv. 37, 38, 39.

Mercifully grant that by thy power we may be defended against all adversity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Ps. iii. 7, 8; lxxxix. 13, 19; lix. 9, 16; John xvii. 15; Ps. xxxii. 10; Heb. vii. 25.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

Trust in God's power against Adversity, and not in what we ourselves can do.

This Collect opens with a disavowal of trust "in any thing that we do," and concludes with a petition, that by our Lord's *divine power* "we may be defended against all adversity." This disavowal humbly invites the scrutiny of him who seeth and knoweth all that we do or think, and brings to mind the impressive earnestness which characterized the answer of St. Peter to his inquiring Lord, "Lord! thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," John xxi. 17. There can be no more convincing proof of our sincerity, than an appeal to the omniscience of an all-seeing God. Thou, O God, seest *all* things: thou seest and knowest, that we put not our trust in any thing that we do. Nothing but sincerity could prompt such an appeal; nothing but faith could offer it.

This admirable prayer gives expression to the different, though kindred, emotions of humility and faith. It leads the soul to a confession of lowliness which debases not, and to a declaration of trust which "puffeth not up." It exhibits the petitioner as striving, with earnest zeal, to do all in his power to work out his salvation; and yet aware that all he can do is nothing worth as a ground of trust. He therefore entreats the Lord, his God, and prays, by his power to "be defended against all adversity." The feelings expressed by the Collect, engage not only the final object of our hopes,—everlasting salvation, but every thing wherein we are concerned. While we all are liable to adversity, we all are unable to defend ourselves against it. The most prudent measures of the rich and great to secure to themselves the blessings of this world, are often vain; for misery has a thousand avenues to the heart. The wisdom of any man who trusts to his own plans for escape from adversity, is but foolishness. Humility and faith, therefore, should be the prevailing emotions of the soul; and they should each be exercised, as they may be called forth, either by the severe trials of adversity, or by the more dangerous temptations of prosperity.

THE EPISTLE.—2 Cor. xi. 19.

At this preparatory period for the solemn season of Lent, the Epistle proposes to us the example of St. Paul, who was eminent for works of mortification; and it sets before us his sufferings and labors. But, so little did he *trust* in these, that he apologizes for what he says respecting himself. As the Corinthians suffered them-

selves to be brought by false teachers into bondage, under the ceremonies of the Jewish law, the Apostle desires that they would bear with him, while he measured himself with them. "If a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face;" "whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also," *v.* 20, 21. Had it not been for false apostles, compelling St. Paul to this defence of himself in order to protect his flock, we should not have received this wonderful description of his life.

Such a life of vicissitudes the world never heard of before; and all this, beyond all human greatness, is touched upon in a few words, so eloquent, and clothed with such humility and sweetness, as to leave us more in admiration of his meekness and forgetfulness of self, than of any of the events of his narrative. "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches," *v.* 27, 28; and not only the churches at large, but "from house to house." With every one, and at all seasons, with many tears he bore the burden of each, in all their weakness, and in all their temptations he sympathized with each, as if his Christian brother's weakness and temptation were his own. He begins to glory, in order to win them over, by proofs infinitely beyond what their false teachers could show; and he passes from these to his afflictions, his infirmities, and his many sorrows. "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities," *v.* 30.

THE GOSPEL.—St. Luke viii. 4 *to* 15.

The Epistle gave an account of the labors and sufferings of St. Paul; and now, that we may not be deterred by taking the pattern of so great a saint, in whom the word sown brought forth so abundantly, the Gospel for this day presents for our instruction the parable of the sower, in which we are taught, that all the results of grace depend on the heart, the soil on which the seed may fall,—on our improvement of the word of life.

The Gospel for last Sunday ended with the words, "many are called, but few chosen;" that for to-day shows us how this is the case. As it is the first of parables, so it is the most comprehensive. It commends itself to every man's conscience, bearing evidence to the sad reality of what we see around us, that "many are called, but few chosen." The various kinds of ground in which the seed is sown, represent the hearts of those hearers, who are indifferent to the power which is to cause the growth and fruitfulness of that seed, whether the germ shoots forth, or, if partially advanced, it is checked in its growth. It brings "no fruit to perfection." To do this, the soil must be tilled and cultivated, with a reliance upon him who rules the heart by his power, and in whom we are to trust for that preparation of the heart, (the good soil,) for its protection against the adversities which proceed from the world, the flesh, and the devil. These prevent or stop its growth. We look to God for a blessing, that it may bring forth "fruit a hundred fold."

With respect to the produce, we may consider the

parable as teaching us, that where God has endowed men with great abilities, he requires a greater increase; and that where he has dealt more sparingly, he looks for less. He does not gather where he has not strewed, nor reap where he hath not sown, Matt. xxv. 24, 26. He does not regard the amount of powers, so much as the quality of the heart. What God requires, and what we are chiefly concerned to seek, is the "honest and good heart," which will dispose us to pray, in the words of our Litany, "that it may please thee to give to all thy people increase of grace to hear meekly thy Word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit."

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, JER. XXXV.

As one means used to bring the Jews to repentance and reformation, the prophet is required to exhibit to them the obedience of the Rechabites, and thereby to condemn the prevailing violation of God's commands.

The Rechabites were descended from the Kenites, 1 Chron. ii. 55; and, although not incorporated with the Jewish nation, they were regarded by the Jews as friends and allies. They were worshippers of the true God, though they were not circumcised. At this time they were sojourning at Jerusalem, whilst their land was invaded by the Babylonians. Their father Jonadab, who was a man of fervent zeal for the pure worship of God, lived about three hundred years before, 2 Kings

x. 15, 20. And he had commanded his children, that they should drink no wine, "neither ye nor your sons for ever." "Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents," *v.* 6, 7. He had probably practised the rules he enjoined; and although he had no religious, but merely a prudential motive, in giving them precepts, the blessings consequent upon their subjection to parental authority is given in these words, "That ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers," *v.* 7. This would be the natural effect of a sober, temperate, and abstemious life, which contributes to health of mind and body, and to a comfortable old age. Prudence and moderation are certainly conducive to piety, and tend to preserve us from the pains and penalties of an ungodly life. The strict observance, by the Rechabites, of their father's commands, is now made an aggravation of the disobedience of the people of Judah. The Rechabites were obedient to the commands of an earthly parent,—"We have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine," *v.* 8. Yet the Jews rejected the repeated admonitions and counsels of the infinite and eternal God, who had sent to them his servants the Prophets, "rising early and speaking," *v.* 14. "And now, because ye have not inclined your ear nor hearkened unto me," *v.* 15; "Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil I have pronounced against them," *v.* 17. If the Rechabites had not used proper means for their safety, by going to Jerusalem when the king of Babylon came into their land, in such a time of calamity, they would have tempted and not have trusted in God, although

they had been commanded to live in tents. But, in their observance of the other commands, they availed themselves of no plea or excuse to avoid their duty, but continued faithfully to discharge it: and see the blessing,—"Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever."

Second Lesson, LUKE VII. *v.* 19.

When the disciples of St. John the Baptist were sent to Jesus, saying, "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" *v.* 19, our Saviour made his own works to praise him: in the same hour he cured many; and he said to John's disciples, "Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached," *v.* 22. He relieved the ailments of men, as proofs of his divine commission; but, at the same time, he warned them to beware of the prejudice, pride, and distrust, which prevent men from entertaining the truth of his religion. "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me," *v.* 23.

When John's messengers had departed, Jesus portrayed the character of their teacher, as the harbinger of the kingdom of Christ; as "a prophet," and "much more than a prophet," *v.* 26, but treated contemptuously by those who should have heard him. "The Pharisees and Lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him," *v.* 30. In like manner, but for other reasons, they rejected the Saviour himself; and they thus exposed themselves to all the

evil consequences of their obstinacy, and excluded themselves from all the benefits of his mission, by their vain confidence in outward ceremonies.

The forgiveness of the penitent, while he was seated at the table of the Pharisee, assures us that faith and a contrite heart are the effectual means of obtaining his mercy. The Pharisee was rebuked by the short parable of the debtor's forgiveness, which showed the love and gratitude that flow from the forgiveness of sin. She had been guilty of many sins; but they were forgiven. "She loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little," *v.* 47. It is not, then, in ourselves, but in God that we are to trust. This great truth is briefly comprehended in this benediction to the sinner, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace," *v.* 50.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, JER. XXXVI.

In this lesson, God commanded his prophet to write out all the prophecies against Israel and Judah, in a book or roll, that they might the better be reminded of what they had heard, and might have a perfect understanding of all that had been said to them, "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them," *v.* 3. In obedience to the divine command, Jeremiah, who was then "shut up" in prison, directed Baruch, his scribe, to write this roll, and to read it in "the ears of the people in the Lord's house upon the fasting day," *v.* 6. This Baruch did; and he read it again, "at the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house," *v.* 10; and a third time, in the ears of the princes, *v.* 15.

With a conviction of its importance, the princes "told all the words in the ears of the king." Then the king sent his attendant Jehudi for the roll; and after he had read therein "three or four leaves," he cut it with a penknife, and "cast it into the fire," *v.* 23, as the most effectual means of its destruction. Notwithstanding this impious act, there was no demonstration of sorrow; nor would the king listen to the intercession of his princes that he would not destroy it. Here was an obstinate determination to exercise his own will. Impatient of reproof, he was resolved not to listen to the warnings of the Almighty or his prophets. "Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments."

The king had the example of good king Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 19, in a similar case. But, alas! the fatal effects of obstinacy and rebellion: "Therefore thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost, and I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity," *v.* 30, 31. The roll was destroyed, irrecoverably; but *another* roll was directed to be transcribed, from the mouth of the Prophet, with other denunciations of God's wrath. "There were added besides unto them many like words," *v.* 32.—"The Word of the Lord endureth for ever," 1 Pet. i. 25.

Second Lesson, Eph. ii.

The great object of the Apostle, in this chapter, is to describe to the Ephesians their miserable condition by nature, and to make them understand and value the

chief end of God in their conversion,—the exceeding riches of his grace, *v.* 7. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins," *v.* 1;—spiritually dead, criminals under the condemnation of a broken law, until redeemed by the blood and quickened by the Spirit of Christ;—dead in sin, that is, having no life of grace in them.

In times past, they had walked as others in the world who are unregenerate, fulfilling their own wishes, "the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others," *v.* 3, all men being naturally children of disobedience. This was their natural state, and their change resulted not from any merit or desert in themselves, or, as our Collect expresses it, not trusting "in any thing that we do." Their salvation depended, not on their works, but on the free grace of God in Christ; "for by grace are ye saved through faith;" Christ being the meritorious, grace the efficient, and faith the instrumental cause of our justification and salvation. But, because it might be objected, that faith is our work, and consequently, if we are justified by faith, we are justified by works, the Apostle adds, "not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast," *v.* 8, 9. He directs them to compare their former condition, when they were "strangers from the covenants of promise," with their present state, "made nigh by the blood of Christ," *v.* 13; and he represents the Church, composed of Jews and Gentiles, under the similitude of a temple, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into a holy temple in the Lord," *v.* 21.

CATECHISM.

"For thine is" "the power." "That it will please him to save and defend us in all dangers both of soul and body." "And this I trust he will do of his mercy and goodness."

In this part of the Lord's prayer and its paraphrase, we are directed to praise God, by ascribing to him all power. By this we are to understand his all-sufficient, infinite, and almighty power, whereby he is able to do all things, so that nothing can resist his will. This is another reason, and a further encouragement, to hope for the success of our petitions, because we address him who hath all power both in heaven and earth, and can do whatsoever pleaseth him. In him is omnipotence and all-sufficiency; he is the fountain of grace and strength, Gen. xvii. 1. He, therefore, who cannot rely upon him for what is necessary as to this life or the next, casts a reproach on him, when he makes this ascription of power.

Were our prayers directed to deaf and dumb idols, those impotent deities of the heathen, that can neither hear nor help, there would be a reason for not bringing any more such vain oblations; and we might soon grow weary of a fruitless and unprofitable service. But since we pray to the Omnipotent Creator and Disposer of all things, who is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us," Eph. iii. 20, we may address with confidence our Benefactor, so able and willing. As he is the fountain of all grace and strength, we may safely rely upon him for the relief of all our wants. His

power, unlike ours, is infinite, independent, and indefectible. Our strength often fails us, and the greatest abilities decline, so that in a short period the vigorous mind and body may become helpless; but God is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," Heb. xiii. 8. With him is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning," James i. 17. See, as to the power and glory of God, 1 Chron. xxix. 11; Ps. lxxii. 18, 19; 1 Tim. i. 17; Rev. v. 13, 14; vii. 12.

ARTICLE XIII.

"Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ."

This Article does not discourage men's endeavors, but increases their humility. It teaches them not to think of themselves above measure, but soberly; to depend always on the mercy of God, and ever to flee to it. As man was corrupted in Adam, he had power to continue in his state of sin and misery, but he had no power to rise again into a state of holiness. Originally, his will was free to do good or evil; but now it is only free to do evil. We have power to do such things as are in themselves pleasing to God, but we have not power so to do them that they will please him. The actions may be accepted, but the manner of doing them may be rejected; because, of ourselves, we can never do them in the way that God commands.

It is here said, that nothing we do before we receive grace can make us meet to receive grace. "After that

the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. iii. 4, 5. To explain this, some of the schoolmen speak of a two-fold merit; a merit of congruity, and a merit of desert. The latter they ascribe to works which a man does by the assistance of grace, and to which a reward is in justice due; the former they ascribe to such works as a man does by the mere strength of free will, which are to be rewarded only out of liberality. But, what foundation is there for such a merit, since all of us are by nature evil? In us "dwelleth no good thing," Rom. vii. 18; "they that are in the flesh cannot please God," viii. 8; and a "corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit," Matt. vii. 17, 18. We may then readily understand why we pray to our Lord God, *that we who "put not our trust in any thing that we do," "may be defended by his power."*

REFLECTIONS.

We have had before us, in the scriptural selections for this day, the example of St. Paul, who gloried not in all his labors, sufferings, and perils, but rather, because of his great work, in his infirmities.

The right preparation of the heart for receiving God's Word, which is "the sword of the Spirit," Eph. vi. 17, and our defence against adversity, is well signified by the parable of the sower. The conduct of the Rechabites is a lesson of subjection to parental authority, which

reproached the stubbornness of Judah; and the impious pride of Jehoiakim, which defied the will of the Lord, teaches us the danger of contemning his Word. These incidents together show the folly of trusting in ourselves, and the great advantage of depending entirely on divine grace.

An exhibition of the practical effect of this doctrine upon the Ephesians, is beautifully set forth in the second lesson for the evening. We may, therefore, in our daily prayers, ascribe to our heavenly Father all *power*, as well as the kingdom and glory, for ever and ever. And what can be too hard for omnipotence to effect for us, or for his bounty to bestow? These encouragements our Saviour adds to our petitions; and they serve as so many stays to our faith, and pillars of our hope and confidence in God. We should, therefore, 1,—Strive to be such persons as God hath promised to engage his omnipotence in blessing. If we hope for every thing from God, we must "walk before him" and be "perfect," as he said to Abraham. 2,—Our expectations from the omnipotence of God must be with submission to his pleasure, his goodness, and his wisdom. With these cautions, we trust him in all our wants, temporal and spiritual; for the Omnipotent God neither slumbereth nor sleepeth; the Almighty fainteth not, neither is weary: "trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength," Isa. xxvi. 4.

Oh, save me, save me from myself, for I am prone to sin;
The fiercest of mine enemies is foaming here within:
Oh, save me, for the waters overwhelm my panting soul,
Mine eyes have lost the beacon bright that blazes at the goal.

My heart is dead, and cannot rise, o'er-burdened with its load;
My soul is dull, and will not lift her eyes unto her God!
My raging foes in fierce array are mocking at my fears,
But, Saviour, bid me joy in thee, and wipe away my tears!

Yes, though I cannot see thee, Lord, thine arm is stretched around,
To save me from the storm, and all mine enemies confound;
Thine eye is watching o'er me, and is smiling on me still,
To comfort me in sadness, and to shelter me from ill;
It ever beams the same in love through many a dreary cloud,
And veils of sin and sorrow oft its light of pity shroud:
And I will ever trust in him, my everlasting strength,
His mighty arm shall work for me, and rescue me at length.

Quinquagesima Sunday.

THE COLLECT.

O Lord, who hast taught that all our doings without charity are nothing worth, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 3; Matt. xxii. 37 to 40; 1 John iii. 17, 18; iv. 20; 1 Tim. i. 5; 1 John v. 3.

Send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, 1 Cor. xii. 13; 2 Cor. xiii. 14; Gal. v. 22, 23; Acts x. 45; 1 Cor. xii. 31; xiv. 1; Rom. xv. 5; 1 Thes. iii. 12; 2 Thess. iii. 5.

The very bond of peace and of all virtues, 1 Pet. iv. 8; Eph. iv. 3; Col. iii. 14; Gal. v. 14; 2 Tim. i. 7.

Without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee, 1 John iii. 14; iv. 8; James ii. 15, 16, 26; Rev. iii. 1; 1 Tim. v. 6.

Grant this for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. John xv. 9, 12; xvii. 21.

SUBJECT FOR THE DAY.

Love and Charity.

The Collects for the two preceding Sundays, are marked with the spirit of humility before God. The Collect for this day, petitions our Lord to send his *Holy Ghost and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues.* In the words of the Collect for charity, we virtually pray for humility; and nothing else can induce us to exercise a charity which requires victory over self-love, and a total disregard for every thing but what tends to the honor of God, the welfare of our fellow-creatures, and the good of our own souls. Now, as nothing can enable us to be thus humble, but *divine aid*, we pray for this charity as the gracious gift of God by his Holy Spirit.

The Spirit alone can impart to us the disposition to suffer long, and be kind to those who inflict the suffering, which is a convincing proof of our being clothed with humility. There is no room for *envy*, in that heart which heavenly-mindedness occupies. But, charity does not fall into the opposite extreme of vanity,—of being puffed up, or behaving itself unseemly. The apostle completes the portrait of the Christian character; describing it as meek, gentle, and forbearing, yet dignified, and animated by a fervent zeal for the honor of God.

Such is the charity for which our Collect teaches us to pray, as *the bond of peace and of all virtues.* We pray for it as a gracious gift, which God vouchsafes to us by the aid of his Holy Spirit. Without this divine aid, we could neither expect the gift, nor have power or

wisdom to exercise it. With this aid, although we are weak of ourselves, we shall be strong in the Lord; strong to suffer patiently; strong to resist envy, vanity, and selfishness. We shall be superior to provocation; thinking no evil, rejoicing not in iniquity, but in the truth; bearing, believing, hoping, and enduring all things; and looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, the foundation of our hopes, and the fountain of our charity.

THE EPISTLE.—1 Cor. xiii. 1.

On this day, the Sunday before Lent, we have the subject of charity presented to us, to show that all works of repentance can be of no avail, unless they begin and end in the love of God. The Epistle for last Sunday gave an account of St. Paul's labors and sufferings in behalf of Christ and his Gospel; and now he teaches us of how little avail all our works must be without charity.

The Epistle for this day is an impressive and beautiful commendation of Christian charity, of faith working by love. Here is shown the necessity of *the excellent* virtue; and its true nature is described by some of its properties and effects. Charity may be said to be the love of God for his own sake, and of our neighbor for God's sake. How strongly does St. Paul show the necessity of this principle in our hearts, when he supposes a person giving all his goods to feed the poor, and yet destitute of Christian charity to his brethren; even giving his body to be burned, but not having the love of

God. By means of charity, our inclinations are purified, and are directed towards heaven and our Creator. By this, the great truth is inculcated, that mortals should love each other, through God their Saviour, who spiritualizes their love, and separates from it what does not belong to its divine essence.

It is in this continued harmony between heaven and earth, between God and man, that we discover the character of true religion. The moral and political institutions of antiquity, are often in contradiction to the sentiments of the soul. Christianity, on the other hand, is ever in unison with the heart. It enjoins no solitary and abstract virtues, but cherishes such as are derived from our wants and are useful to mankind. It has placed charity as an abundant fountain in the deserts of life. Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up: doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, *v.* 4–7.

THE GOSPEL.—St. Luke xviii. 31–43.

The Gospels for the two preceding Sundays, served to prepare us for fasting and other exercises of self-denial, in the approaching season of Lent. But all "bodily exercise," without charity, profiteth nothing, unless we add faith "which worketh by love." The Church now, therefore, teaches us, in the latter part of the Gospel, how we are to perform our several duties. She com-

mends to us by the example of the blind beggar's faith in Christ; and advising us to continue instant in our prayers, and not to despair of the acceptance of them, because we are not immediately heard, but to cry so much the more, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

The former part of the Gospel greatly contributes to the purpose of our present devotions, by putting us in mind of our blessed Redeemer's sufferings and death. Thus, we have set before our eyes the noblest and most perfect pattern of the grace of charity, recommended in the Epistle.

For some months before his death, our Lord had been preparing his disciples for his approaching sufferings. As many as nine times, this may be noticed in the Gospels. It is peculiarly seasonable, at this time, to be reminded of our blessed Redeemer's death; and he is here set forth as the noblest and most perfect pattern of charity. As the fast draws near, in which we are penitentially humbled before God, "crucifying our affections and lusts," and thus dying to the world after the example of his death through which alone we hope for pardon; our Saviour's declaration to his disciples of his approaching last sufferings, is especially suitable for our meditation. Let us remember, that our great Exemplar kept his death constantly in view; and that they who imitate him as they ought, will live in a constant prospect of and preparation for their own departure. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body," 2 Cor. iv. 16.

MORNING SERVICE.

First Lesson, LAM. I.

The design of the Church, on this and the two preceding Sundays, is to call our thoughts away from scenes of festivity, and to fix them upon the manner of Christ's coming into the world, his death, and his crucifixion for our sins.

This lesson is appropriate, as it sets forth and bewails the miseries of Jerusalem. Her present deplorable condition is aggravated, by comparing it with her former prosperous state. "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!" *v.* 1. These lamentations were not composed until after the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, and the depopulation of the country by the migration of all its inhabitants. The prophet does not describe these events in the style of prophetic predictions, but he alludes to and bewails them as fully accomplished.

The miseries of Jerusalem's ecclesiastical state are deplored. Zion, comprehending Mount Moriah, where Isaac was to have been offered as a sacrifice, gave its name to the temple and its courts. These were no longer frequented. The solemn feasts were neglected and profaned; and her songs were turned into sighs. "The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness," *v.* 4. The prophet laments, that her adversaries had

obtained advantages over her, and that she had become their vassal. This judgment Moses threatened, Deut. xxviii. 43, 44. Her sins were the cause of these afflictions: "her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions," *v.* 5.

In the midst of these calamities, and the treachery of her friends, God is called upon for his compassionate mercies, *v.* 9, 11. The justice of his judgments is acknowledged; and the Church appeals to the spectators without, for a comparison of her afflictions with those borne by others. "The Lord is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow," *v.* 18. As the Church, throughout this melancholy recital of her afflictions, appeals to the goodness and mercy of God, we are reminded, that all works of repentance can be of no avail, unless they begin and end with the love of God. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," Jude, *v.* 21.

Second Lesson, MARK VI. *to v.* 30.

Before our Lord entered upon his public ministry, he was probably employed by Joseph in the occupation which he himself pursued. Agreeably to the Jewish custom, fathers taught their children some art, or trade; and, instead of associating with those who were conspicuous in society for rank or learning, Jesus was thus led to make himself of no reputation, and to take upon him "the form of a servant," Phil. ii. 7. This was offensive to those who had expected a very different

Messiah; and although they were "astonished at his doctrine," they were disappointed in the character he had assumed. "Is not this," said they, "the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judas and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?" *v.* 3.

The acts of our Lord, as narrated in this chapter, afford a beautiful example of that charity, which is to-day the chief subject of our meditation. Instead of rebuking their contemptuous treatment, he palliated it by the use of a proverb: "A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house," *v.* 4. Their unbelief prevented those wonderful instances of his divine power, which might have been attended with the greatest good to them. Yet it did not prevent his beneficence in the cause of suffering humanity; for, although "he could there do no mighty work," in his compassionate mercy "he laid his hands on a few sick folk, and healed them," *v.* 5. With a disposition that "beareth all things," and "suffereth long," he continued there, and "went round about the villages, teaching," *v.* 6.

His commission to his disciples, is fraught with the same spirit of self-denial and forbearance which he himself underwent, in his desire to aid the infirmities of his fellow-man. Thus they also went forth, and preached that men should repent; they cast out devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.

We have an instance in Herod, that a man may reverence the faithfulness and holiness of good men, and yet in seasons of pleasure be tempted to disregard the plainest dictates of humanity; "for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and ob-

served him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly," *v.* 20. But the wicked indulgence for which John had reproached him, was the occasion of the death of that good man. When Herod hears of Christ, conscience is awakened, and he sees in him John, whom he had beheaded. They who would keep an undisturbed peace, should keep "a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men," Acts xxiv. 16.

EVENING SERVICE.

First Lesson, LAM. III.

The prophet here endeavors to encourage the Jews to resignation amidst their calamities, by representing his own behavior under his great afflictions. Throughout this chapter, he indulges in pious reflections upon the end which God proposes in these chastisements, and the good use which men ought to make of them. In this view of the lesson, the prophet is considered as addressing the afflicted Jews, in order to counsel and encourage them. Speaking as one who knew the heart of mourners, and could sympathize with them, he refers to the treatment visited on him in the discharge of his prophetical office, Jer. xv. 10, 17, 18; xx. 8; xxvi. 8; xxxvi. 26; xxxvii. 15; xxxviii. 6. "I am the man that have seen afflictions by the rod of his wrath," *v.* 1. Then follow instances of God's displeasure and of the fruits of it. "My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me," *v.* 20.

But, in the midst of such corrections, he is reminded of the infinite goodness of God, who, notwithstanding

inflictions of sorrow and misery for a time, will make good the work of his gracious preservation. He will "in wrath remember mercy," Hab. iii. 2,—and will comfort the mourners in Zion. "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning," *v.* 21, 22, 23. Thus a state of humility produces the highest exercise of charity, in meekness, mildness, and a forgiving spirit towards those who are the instruments of our trouble. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth," *v.* 27. And when we contemplate the example of patience which we have in Christ; when we submit to contumely and reproach as he did, without rendering railing for railing; then, in the language of the prophet, may we have *hope* in the multitude of God's mercies. Our afflictions assist us, in the discipline which promotes a serious consideration and examination of ourselves, a searching of the heart, which brings us again to God with an acceptable service. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens," *v.* 40, 41.

Second Lesson, EPHESIANS III.

In the first lesson for this evening, the Old Testament prophet is represented as humbly recounting his sufferings and afflictions, and God's mercy, to encourage the Jews to trust in him and wait for his salvation. Here the Apostle Paul acquaints the Ephesians with his tribulations, for having proclaimed the privileges of the Gospel as belonging to the believing Gentiles, al-

though not circumcised. "For this cause I, Paul, (am) the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." He speaks with lowliness, of his preaching to them the unsearchable riches of Christ; he estimates himself as "less than the least of all saints;" and he desires that they should not be concerned because of his sufferings, which would greatly profit them. "Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory," *v.* 13. This caused him to bow his knees and pray for spiritual blessings upon them, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, *v.* 17. The consequent fervent and devout affections, are described with a beauty and comprehensiveness not surpassed in Scripture. That ye "may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ," *v.* 18, 19.

The dimensions of this love are only to be estimated by its adaptation to the wants of men, by its sufficiency, and by its continuance. And so the fathers understood this text. They interpreted its "breadth,"—its extent to all ages, natures, and ranks of men; its *length*, Christ's love to us from the beginning of the world, *being chosen in Christ from the beginning*, i. 4; iii. 11; its *depth*, the greatness of his humiliation, which led him to change "the form of God" for that of a servant, and to submit to an ignominious and painful death; its *height*, his being now exalted to the right hand of Majesty, engaged there in acts of kindness to us, using his whole power in heaven and earth for the benefit of his Church. Such are the dimensions, which faintly convey to us an impression of "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

CATECHISM.

"To love him [my neighbor] as myself," "and be in charity with all men."

The love of our neighbor comprehends all those duties which are contained in the Second Table, or the last six commandments. The FIFTH COMMANDMENT teaches us, "to love, honor, and succor" our "father and mother,"(*a*) our natural parents; and to "submit" ourselves to those who represent them, whether *governors*, *teachers*, or *masters;* to honor and obey the *civil authority*, that is, our political parent, and her representatives, as judges, magistrates, and civil officers; (*b*) to submit ourselves to the directions of the Church, our spiritual parent, and her *spiritual pastors*, the bishops and clergy, who represent her authority. (*c*) The Fifth Commandment teaches us, also, to *order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters*, that is, to behave ourselves with humility and respect towards all whom God has placed in a higher rank or station of life than ourselves. (*d*)

The SIXTH Commandment bids us *hurt nobody by word or deed*, that is, not say or do any thing to the prejudice of another; and *bear no malice nor hatred in our heart*, that is, not have any such disposition as would prompt to the doing of mischief. (*e*)

(*a*) Exod. xxi. 15, 17; Lev. xix. 3; Prov. i. 8, 9; vi. 20; xv. 5; xx. 20; xxiii. 22, 25; xxx. 17.

(*b*) Exod. xxii. 28; Matt. xxii. 21; Mark xii. 17; Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 7; 1 Pet. ii. 17; 2 Pet. ii. 10.

(*c*) See under title "*Catechism*," for the Third Sunday in Advent.

(*d*) Lev. xix. 32; 1 Pet. v. 5.

(*e*) Matt. v. 9, 25, 44; Mark vii. 21; John xiii. 34; Rom. xiii. 9, 10; Gal. v. 21; Eph. iv. 26, 31, 33; 1 Pet. iii. 8.

The SEVENTH enjoins upon us, *to keep our body in temperance, soberness, and chastity.* Temperance here means moderation in eating and drinking; Soberness, steadiness of conduct; and Chastity, freedom from all impure and immodest desires or actions. (*a*)

The EIGHTH requires of us, "to be *true and just in all our dealings:*" and "to keep our hands *from picking and stealing,*" that is, stealing little things, pilfering. (*b*)

The NINTH charges us to keep our tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering; (*c*) the tongue being given to set forth the glory of God and to set forward the good of our neighbor.

The TENTH demands of us, not to *covet nor desire other men's goods;* (*d*) "but to learn and labor truly to get our "own living, and to do" our "duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call" us. The sense is, that this will preserve us from inordinately coveting any thing that is another's, and will prompt us to use diligence in the business of some lawful calling.

The whole duty is summed up in this one word, *Love* or *Charity*, the best and noblest of all the Gospel graces.

Our Saviour has truly styled it the *fulfilling of the law;* love to God constraining us to all that we owe to him; and love to our neighbor including all the parts of our duty to him. Our duty to our neighbor, then, is contained in the foregoing six commandments. And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in the saying, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," Rom. xiii. 9.

(*a*) Rom. xiii. 13, 14; 1 Cor. ix. 27; 2 Cor. vii. 1; James i. 14, 15.
(*b*) Eph. iv. 28; Phil. iv. 8; 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12; 2 Thess. iii. 12; 1 Tim. ii. 2.
(*c*) Ps. xxxiv. 13; xxxix. 1; cxli. 3; James i. 26; iii. 5, 8.
(*d*) Rom. vii. 7; Ps. x. 3; Prov. xxviii. 16; Hab. ii. 9; Matt. vi. 19-24; Luke xii. 15; Rom. xiii. 9; Eph. v. 5; Heb. xiii. 5.

ARTICLE XXVIII.

The Supper of the Lord,—"a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another."

The Lord's Supper is indeed a sign of that mutual love, and of that intimate friendship, which exist or ought to exist among Christians. We, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread, 1 Cor. x. 17. The excellent grace of charity is very much strengthened and increased by this Sacrament; in both of its branches, the love of God and the love of our neighbor. The lively representation we here have of divine love, must excite in our hearts the love of both. "The love of Christ constraineth us." These are those cords or chains of love that strongly draw the affections; nor does any thing else so warm our hearts, as sympathy. This promotes our love to God; and it likewise binds us in the bonds of love and affection to all our brethren, who are all members of Christ's body, and for whom he was pleased to shed his own blood. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us," 1 John iii. 23; iv. 10, 11, 12; John xiii. 35.

ARTICLE XXXVII.

We hold it to be the duty of all men who are professors of the Gospel, to pay respectful obedience to the Civil Authority, regularly and legitimately constituted.

The Civil Authority constitutes the safety of the people; for it protects our lives and fortunes, and is the commonwealth. If *it* is safe and prosperous, the people

are happy; otherwise, it is soon involved in misery and confusion. Therefore, the Apostle admonishes us to pray "for kings, and all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all goodness and honesty," 2 Tim. ii. 2, which cannot be done without them. For this reason, St. Peter has united the *fear of God* and the *honor of the king;* and St. Paul reminds us, to be "subject to the higher powers," and to obey magistrates, Rom. xiii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14; 2 Chron. xix. 5, 8; 1 Chron. xvi. 4.

ARTICLE XXXVIII.

"Every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability."

We are assured by Christ himself, that the neglect or performance of no duty shall so much be noticed, as this great duty of charity to the poor and needy, Matt. xxv. 34; and St. Paul admonishes Timothy thus, "Charge them that are rich," "that they do good, that they be rich in good works; ready to distribute, willing to communicate," 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. We see what particular care God took of the poor, under the old dispensation, and what variety of provision was made for them. All this certainly must be carried as much higher among Christians, as the law of love and charity is raised to a higher degree in the Gospel. It would therefore appear, that we are bound to relieve the poor and needy, according to our ability, Luke xi. 42; 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Luke xi. 41; 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18; 1 John iii. 17; Heb. xiii. 16; Rom. xii. 13; Gal. vi. 10; Heb. vi. 10; Isa. xxxii. 8; 2 Cor. ix. 1, 5, 6, 7; Deut. xv. 11; Acts xx. 35; 1 Tim. vi. 6; and see the Homily on Alms Deeds.

REFLECTIONS.

In the exalted account which has been given to us of charity, we may feel overwhelmed at our great want of it, as we fathom the depth of our need, and estimate our deeds by the Gospel requirement. We should seriously examine ourselves, that we may not make a false estimate. We are "nothing," if we have not charity; and we are without it, if we have not its proofs. If we value our attainments in religious knowledge, our liberality to the poor, our readiness to die for the truth, (and how few can go thus far!) the Scripture declares, that these are of no value without charity. It teaches, that the doers of evil, those who live to themselves, the envious, the ambitious, the self-conceited, the insolent and haughty, the selfish and narrow-spirited, the furiously angered, evil surmisers, severe censurers, those who delight in scandal, or who spread or believe it,—all are without charity. Pretences to religion, made by such persons, shall profit them nothing.

How ought this to awaken us! How, to quicken our care in searching, discovering, and avoiding a secret danger, perhaps never thought of before! How seasonably does the Church select this account of Charity, at the approach of Lent, to prevent men from deluding their souls with the severities of that season, if destitute of this chief Christian grace, this indispensable condition of salvation. Our great relief is to look to Christ in prayer, with regard to every particular of our daily miscarriages and failures. How wisely then has the Church instructed us; and how zealously should we pray to Almighty God, that he would *send his Holy*

Ghost and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of Charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, lest living without this, we may at last be counted dead before him.

CHARITY.

Love suffers long: is just, sincere,
  Forgiving, slow to blame;
Friend of the good, she grieves to hear
  An erring brother's shame.
Meek, holy, free from selfish zeal,
  To generous pity prone,
She envies not another's weal,
  Nor triumphs in her own.

No evil, no suspicious thought,
  She harbors in her breast;
She tries us by the deeds we've wrought,
  And still believes the best.
Love never fails: though knowledge cease,
  Though prophecies decay,
Love, Christian love, shall still increase,
  Shall still extend her sway.

Here dimly through life's shadowy glass
  We strain our infant eyes;
Soon shall the earth-born vapors pass,
  And light unclouded rise;
Then Hope shall sink in changeless doom,
  Then Faith's bright race be o'er;
But thou, eternal Love, shalt bloom
  More glorious than before.

THE LORD BLESS THEE, AND KEEP THEE: THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON THEE, AND BE GRACIOUS UNTO THEE: THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON THEE, AND GIVE THEE PEACE, BOTH NOW AND EVERMORE. AMEN.

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